OLD!

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THE MAKING OF…

RAMPAGE

THE FULL HAIRY STORY BEHIND MIDWAY'S MENTAL SMASH-'EM-UP



GAUNTLET

THE COMPLETE HISTORY FROM ARCADE TO DS

EXIT

IN THIS ISSUE

ULTIMATE
READ THE FULL STORY BEHIND ITS C64 GAMES

CASTLEVANIA
CELEBRATING 23 YEARS OF VICIOUS VAMPIRE SLAYING

COMMODORE-16
WHY YOU NEED TO OWN COMMODORE'S 8-BIT BABY

SAMBA DE AMIGO
HOW SEGA CREATED ITS RHYTHM-ACTION HIT



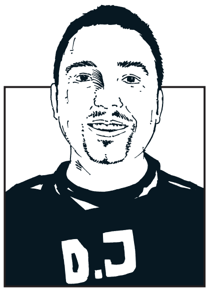
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THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE RHYTHM-ACTION GAME



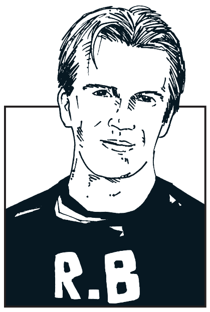
DARRAN JONES

Rock Band, quite possibly the greatest multiplayer experience I've ever participated in. I'm absolutely rubbish on the drums though…

Expertise: Juggling a wife, magazine and two kids

Currently playing:
Pure

Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



RICHARD BURTON

It's *Guitar Hero III: Legends Of Rock* for me. There's nothing quite like sliding about on your knees in your shag-piled lounge playing *Welcome To The Jungle*… albeit somewhat painfully. Play 'til your knees bleed!

Expertise:
Spectrum and Amstrad gaming

Currently playing:
Medal Of Honour: Frontline

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



STUART HUNT

It's got to be the original hip-hopping hero *PaRappa The Rapper*. Any videogame about a mutt rapping about potentially crapping in his pants has to win by default, surely?

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them

Currently playing:
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

Favourite game of all time:
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed



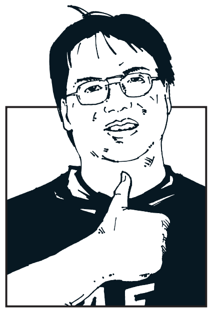
CRAIG GRANNELL

Rhythm Tengoku (specifically the adorable Rabbit Jump and The*Bon Odori), with its great little box and terrific little stickers. And anyone who says otherwise is a liar!

Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control

Currently playing:
Zoo Keeper (again)

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



ANDREW FISHER

PaRappa The Rapper, for daring to be different with its 2D-ish graphics and its fantastic collection of songs.

Expertise: All things Commodore 64 and Nintendo

Currently playing:
No More Heroes

Favourite game of all time:
Wizball



PAUL DRURY

Dancing Stage, Frequency, Amplitude, Donkey Konga, Amigo, PaRappa, Lammy, Ulala and those *Elite Beat Agents*… it's my favourite genre and I love 'em all. If I have to pick one, then *vib-ribbon*. Such beautiful, inspired lunacy.

Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits

Currently playing:
Imagine Teacher

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



DAVID CROOKES

It has to be *PaRappa The Rapper*. Rodney Greenblat's characters may have been flat but the game was lively as hell. Kick. Punch. It's all in the mind. And it stuck in mine for years.

Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation

Currently playing:
Call Of Duty 4

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



MARTYN CARROLL

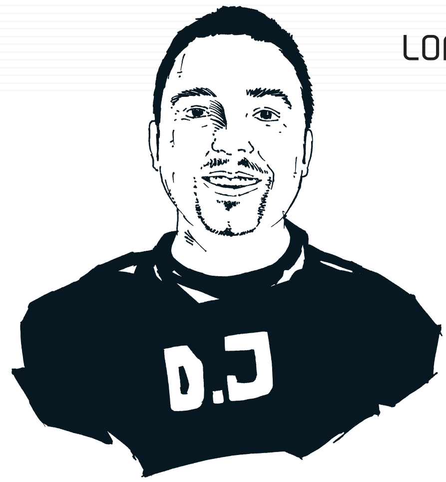
I'm pretty cack-handed when it comes to stuff like *Guitar Hero*, and would probably do myself an injury on a dance mat, so I'll go with the brilliant *Patapon* on the PSP.

Expertise: *The Crabs* novels of Guy N Smith

Currently playing:
Dynamite Dan II

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy

LOADING...



It's a busy time of the year for the games industry. Publishers will literally be cranking out titles on a weekly basis and will be falling over themselves to try to part you from your hard-earned cash.

Normally **Retro Gamer** can happily bypass the silly season, but over the past few years there have been plenty of next-gen (now current-gen) titles worthy of both your attention and mine. *Super Mario Galaxy* and *NiGHTS: Journey Of Dreams* were able to build on the brilliance of previous versions – one admittedly, far more effectively than the other – while titles like *Castlevania: Order Of Ecclesia* and the incoming *Sonic Unleashed* look set to do the same this year around.

Still, what does amaze us is those publishers that seemingly forget about a game's actual heritage and fail to include those magical moments that made the original games so loved by fans in the first place. Several articles this issue will all see new titles based on them over the next few months, including this month's cover game *Gauntlet*. It's going to be interesting to see if any of them have actually studied the history books and can live up to their lengthy legacies.

Enjoy the magazine







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BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES



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At-a-glance retro sections…



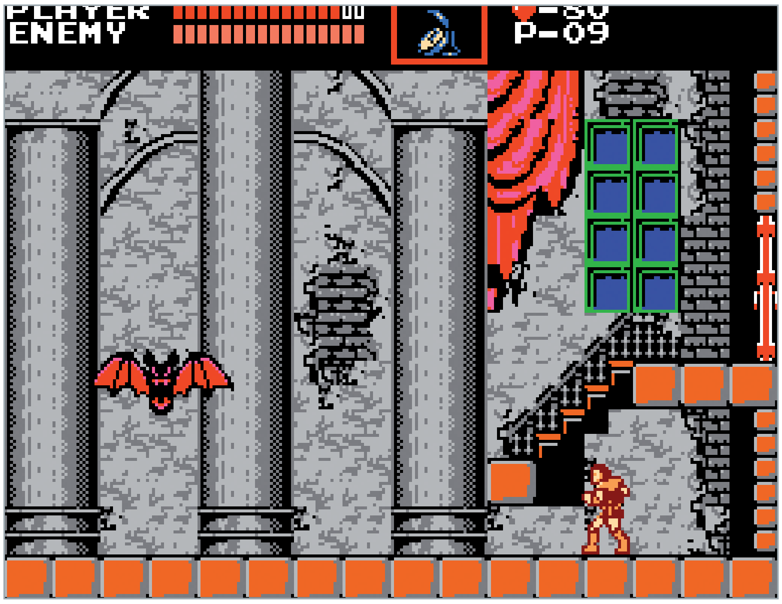




ESSENTIALS

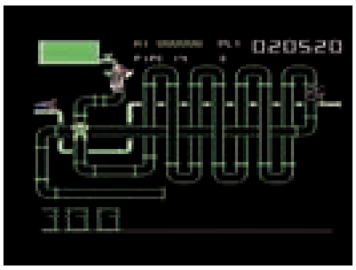
THE COMPLETE HISTORY – CASTLEVANIA

54 WITH THE SEASON OF THE WITCH APPROACHING, RETRO GAMER TAKES A LOOK AT KONAMI'S LONG-RUNNING CASTLEVANIA FRANCHISE AND HOPES SOMEONE REMEMBERED THE GARLIC



THE MAKING OF…

64 THE BOYS FROM TASKSET REVEAL HOW A SIMPLE DRIPPING TAP SPURRED THEM ON TO CREATE ONE OF THEIR MOST SUCCESSFUL FRANCHISES, THE EXCELLENT SUPER PIPELINE…



RETRORATED



THE GAMES LISTING…

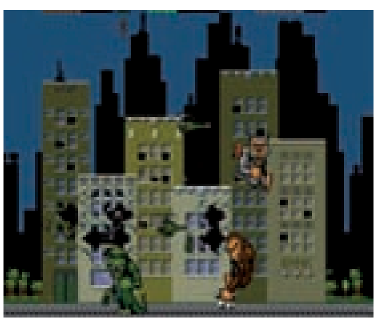
If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it



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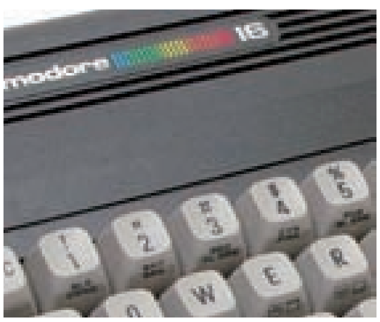
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THE MAKING OF…

RAMPAGE

70 **Retro Gamer** does the monster mash with *Rampage*'s developer and finds out why it nearly didn't happen.



RETROINSPECTION

COMMODORE 16

78 It may not have been as powerful as the C64, but the Commodore 16 still had plenty of great games.



THE MAKING OF…

SAMBA DE AMIGO

84 With *Samba* recently hitting Nintendo's Wii, we look back at the creation of the original rhythm-action hit.



THE RETURN OF SUPER SONIC?

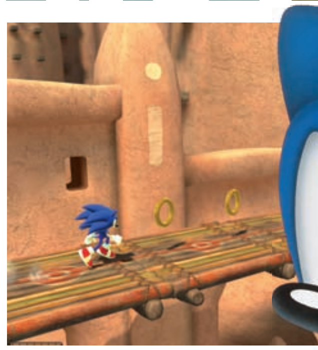
WE GET SOME PLAYTIME WITH SONIC UNLEASHED.

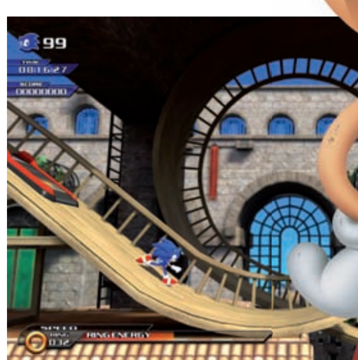
Although we still have a fondness for Sonic the Hedgehog, his last few outings have failed to capture the spirit of the glory days of Sega's eponymous mascot. Although both Sonic Adventure games had moments of brilliance, Sonic titles are all about speed, blue skies and level after level of icy canyons, airships and mechanical smelting stages that snake comfortably into cannons, ziplines, flumes rides and the like. We don't want RPG elements, we don't want fisticuffs, we don't need guns or motorbikes, we don't want Shadow, we don't want to collect trading cards (well, Darran does) and we don't want to unlock artwork.

Following our recent hands-on with *Sonic Unleashed,* we are pleased to report that this is a potential return to form for Sega's blue bomber. We didn't get very long with the game, so we didn't really get to see a great deal. But what we did see had us very surprised and excited. The game basically feels like *Sonic Adventure* but with a greater emphasis on the action stages, while the adventuring takes a more peripheral role. Each area within the game takes the form of continents dotted around the globe (yup, it's set on Earth), with each stage divided into two parts. The first allows you to free roam, interact with NPCs and power up Sonic (or so we're told, we didn't see this) and the other lets you race through the real-world areas and indulge in some classic high-speed action.

If you've been following the progress of the game you'll be aware that *Sonic Unleashed* adopts an unusual night-and-day element that affects both gameplay and Sonic himself. As well as racing, Sonic will also get to hack and slash his way through certain stages. So how does he do this with toilet brushes for arms, you might be asking? Well, owing to the freaky side effects of some evil Emerald Crystals, when night falls Sonic transforms into a snarling werewolf (actually make that werehog), thus adding another dimension to the game.

Now, we weren't shown any of these werehog sections so we can't comment on how well they've been implemented, but if Sega has given them the same level of care and attention we witnessed in the racing stages – which were genuinely exhilarating – the results will be something special. The game itself is primarily 3D, but the camera continually switches from behind to the side of Sonic, *Sonic Rush*-style, to really ramp up the pace. We've seen the game in action and can report that the visuals and music were bright, buoyant and smile-inducing, and projected a real sense of nostalgia. It's shaping up very well indeed and we look forward to finally getting our hands on some finished code later this year.









Here's the game's box art. As you can see, it clearly had that air of *Contra* meets karate-men-fighting-on-floating-wooden-crates about it.

THE FALL AND RISE OF **MATT HAZARD**

D3 SET TO RESUSCITATE MARATHON'S CLASSIC FRANCHISE WITH A BANG



Aussie publisher D3 Publishing has recently announced that it's dusting off Marathon Software's classic shoot-'em-up *Matt Hazard** for a forthcoming franchise reboot that promises to shove a few awesome-grenades up the nostrils of Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 owners. Matt Hazard originally made his debut in 1983 in a low-key arcade game called *The Adventures Of Matt In Hazard Land*. The game quickly gained notoriety in the US for its unhinging depiction of run-and-gun action. In fact, the game generated such a maelstrom of controversy that some arcade owners reputedly shunned the machine, and consequently a concerned parent group attempted to push through an Act to cap the amount of red sprites used in videogames. The Act was later quashed after it was proved that red was in fact 'a very popular colour that is used for things other than blood colouration'. The jury agreed.

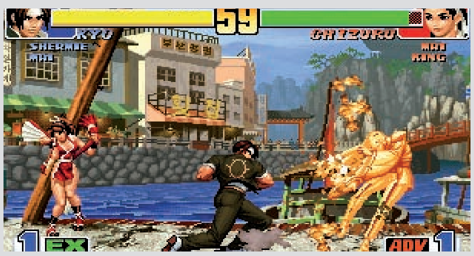
Unfortunately, at this stage little is known about the game itself, but you can rely on **Retro Gamer** to keep you up to speed with any news we hear about the game through our blog. Also, the website http://www.weaponsofmattdestruction.com has the complete lowdown on this forgotten videogame star, and his previous body of work.

***We know this game isn't actually real, so please don't write in.**



IGNITION PROVES IT'S THE **KING OF [RETRO] FIGHTERS**







PLAYSTATION 2 OWNERS PREPARE FOR THE ULTIMATE MATCH

Fighting game fans, especially those with a penchant for games whose titles have royal connotations, are in for a treat because our chums at Ignition Entertainment recently announced that *The King Of Fighters '98: Ultimate Match* will be punching and kicking its way to the United States… and could quite possibly be 'bringing it' to our far less clement shores.

The game will feature an all-new Ultimate mode, which will allow ardent followers of the beat-'em-up genre to tweak their characters' movements. The title is coming to PlayStation 2 and the original Neo Geo, and features a monumental 64 fighters. Nine of these combatants are exclusive new characters from previous entries in the series. *The King Of Fighters '98: Ultimate Match* is currently pencilled in for a new-year release.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS



Will Club Nintendo's latest effort be as good as its last Game & Watch release?

ONLY IN JAPAN…

Not content with giving lucky owners the chance to win an exclusive Game & Watch compilation for their DS, Club Nintendo of Japan is now giving away yet another excellent free game. Nintendo's second compilation not only consists of the two classic titles *Octopus* and *Parachute*, it is also combining both titles together to form a brand-new game. We've no idea how the two titles will mesh together – although we have a pretty good idea – as our Japanese just isn't that good. We do know, however, that regular contributor Ashley Day is a sucker for things like this, so we'll nab it off him as soon as he's purchased an overpriced copy off eBay. Stay tuned for a definitive review soon.





GAME ON!

RETRO REMAKES COMPETITION NOW UP AND RUNNING

We love RetroRemakes.com and not just because it's proved an excellent site to visit whenever we need reviews for our homebrew section. No, what impresses us most about the site is the sheer amount of talented coders there and the amazing games that seem to effortlessly be churned out.

And we were delighted to hear that they've announced a new remakes competition. Some truly excellent entries are already starting to appear in an effort to win that coveted first place. Best of all there are six different categories in which you can take part: Retro Remakes, Games That Weren't, Sequels That Weren't, A Game For Helen, 8-Bit Mashup, and We Like It Retro – so there should be something to cater to all your programming skills.

While the Retro Remakes competition is likely to be the most popular, we recommend that you look for the entries under A Game For Helen, which is geared toward creating simple one-touch/motion-controlled titles for adults and children with life-shortening conditions (visit http://www.helenanddouglas.org.uk for more details). You should also check out 8-Bit Mashup, which is looking for the horrific offspring that would be created if two distinctly different 8-bit games were combined.

Registration for the competition ends on 23 November while the actual competition itself finishes on 6 December. We'll be looking in more detail at some of the entries next month, but in the meantime head over to http://oddbob.wordpress.com/about for the full competition information.

HERO OF THE MONTH



THOR

HERO OF THE MONTH
Every month, **Retro Gamer** looks back at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of *Gauntlet*'s Thor.

First appearance: *Gauntlet*

Weapon of choice: Bloody big axe

Most likely to: Hit you… with his bloody big axe

Least likely to: Stand a hope of getting it on with Thyra the Valkyrie

Unusual fact: Ska band Five Iron Frenzy once released a song called *Wizard Needs Food Badly*.





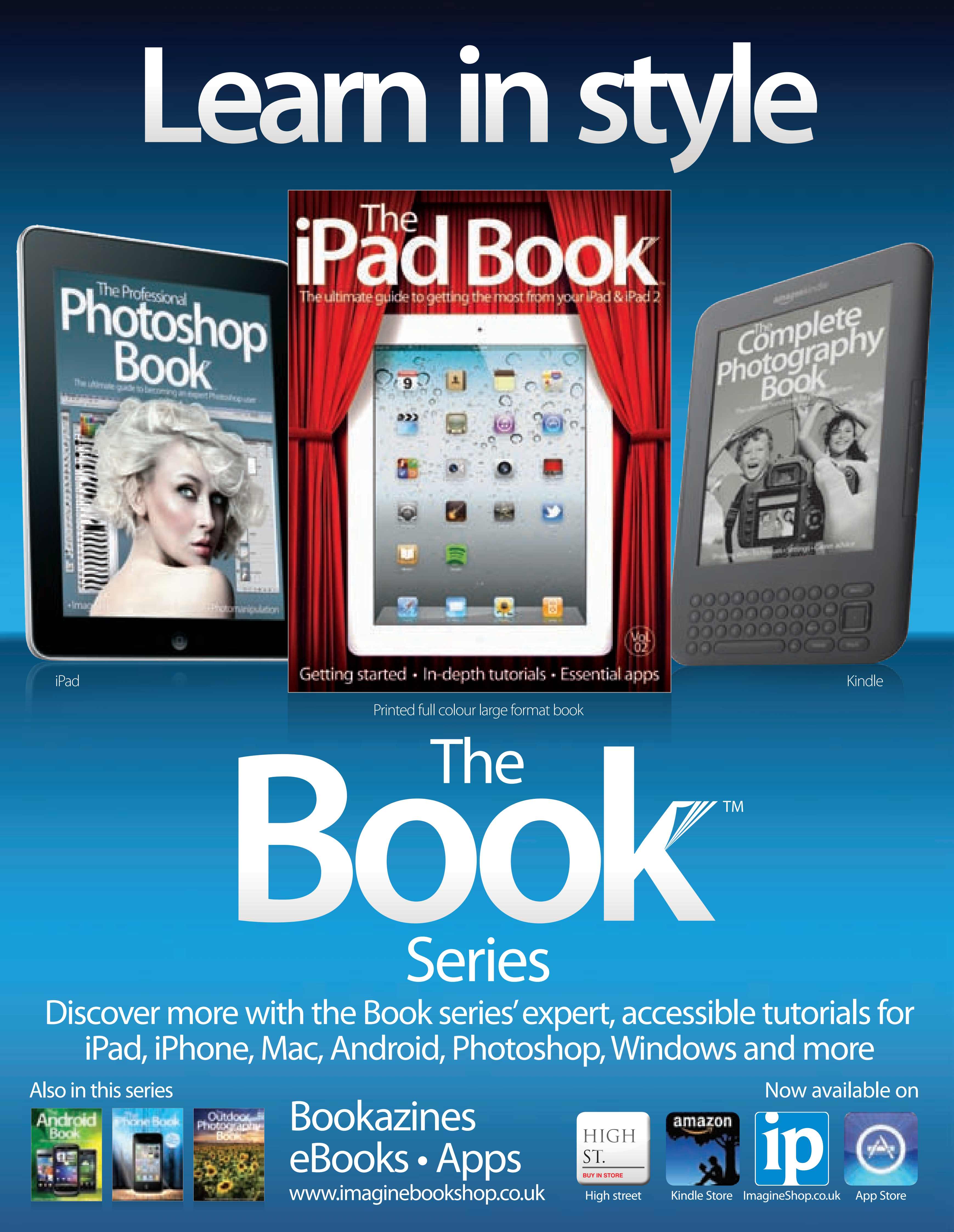
FEEL THE THUNDER

SEGA'S THUNDER FORCE SEQUEL IS NEARLY HERE

Slowly, but oh so surely, more and more news is being leaked from Sega about the incoming Thunder Force VI. Initially due to appear back on Sega's Dreamcast, the game was seemingly cancelled when creator Technosoft was purchased by pachinko maker Twenty-one Company, causing shoot-'em-up fans around the world to wail in despair. Now, however, *Thunder Force* is back and it would appear that Sega means business. Helmed by Tetsu Okano, who was previously responsible for GBA hits *Astro Boy: Omega Factor* and *Gunstar Super Heroes*, it's already looking spectacular and will hopefully do big business in Japan when it sees a release toward the end of this month.

What's getting us most excited about this new release, though, is that many of the bosses featured so far all appear to be from previous games in the franchise. We've definitely recognised a couple from *Part III* and *V*, so don't be surprised if *Thunder Force VI* ends up looking more like a homage than a brand-new game.

In a perfect world *Thunder Force VI* will sell by the bucket load and Sega will happily bring the game to the UK. Until then you may like to do what we did and just get your hands on a Japanese PlayStation 2


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retro* GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past doesn't mean there aren't plenty of games and events to look forward to. Every month we list all the exciting games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



OCTOBER

CASTLEVANIA: ORDER OF ECCLESIA

Released: 31 October

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

After being slightly disappointed with *Portrait Of Ruin*, we're hoping Ecclesia will be a whip-cracking return to form. Although it doesn't appear to be building on the two-player mechanics that appeared in *Portrait*, the new Glyph system does look fun and there are plenty of minions to battle against. Definitely one to keep an eye on.



OCTOBER

GAUNTLET

Released: 31 October

Publisher: Eidos

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

We've been following *Gauntlet* for some time now, and we're pleased to say that Backbone Entertainment has done the long-running franchise proud. The multiplayer is to a very high standard, there's some great variety in the gameplay and it manages to capture the spirit of the arcade original. You can get our definitive opinion on page 98, but you should definitely track this down.



OCTOBER

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

Released: 31 October

Publisher: Sega

Price: £29.99

Format: Wii

Despite being a cheap-and-cheerful port, Sega's *House Of The Dead* repack was certainly great fun to play. *Overkill* has just been announced for a Halloween release, and while graphically it's a lot darker than previous games in the franchise, it's still looking like a lot of fun. But will Sega remember to include the original *House Of The Dead*?



OCTOBER

THUNDER FORCE IV

Released: 31 October

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: PS2

Praise be to Sega, it's only gone and announced a brand-new sequel to Tecmo's *Thunder Force* franchise. We've obviously already covered this news, but since seeing as many of the screenshots feature revamped bosses from *Part III* (incidentally our favourite in the series) we've become giddy with excitement. Now if only Sega would revive *Panzer Dragoon Saga*…



NOVEMBER

SONIC UNLEASHED

Released: 7 November

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99-£49.99

Format: Wii, PS3, 360

We always look forward to Sega's Stefan McGarry coming down, and not just because he gives out cool gifts (a Sonic Chronicles Stylus) when the other mags go without. Anyway, this moonth Stefan unleashed Sonic's latest adventure, and we're pleased to say that it's a massive improvement over his previous 360 and PS3 outing. With any luck we'll have a review in the very next issue. So sit tight until then.



NOVEMBER

TOMB RAIDER: UNLEASHED

Released: 21 November

Publisher: Eidos

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii, DS, 360, PS3, PC, PSP

Now that those extremely embarrassing publicity shots for the new Lara are out of the way, we can simply sit back and wait for *Underworld* to arrive. The excellent *Uncharted* for PlayStation 3 has really raised the bar since *Tomb Raider Anniversary* came along, so *Underworld* is going to have to be something very special indeed. Crystal Dynamics, we wish you the best of luck.



NOVEMBER

CASTLEVANIA: JUDGMENT

Released: 28 November

Publisher: Konami

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii

We'd be lying if we said that we weren't concerned about *Castlevania: Judgment*. Konami doesn't exactly have a stellar reputation for creating one-on-one fighters (*Turtles Tournament Fighters*, anyone?) and many will wonder why the developer didn't just opt for a *Metroid Prime*-style approach instead. Still, we'll reserve judgement (ho ho) until we see the final product. Fingers crossed, eh?



NOVEMBER

AGE OF EMPIRES: MYTHOLOGIES

Released: 28 November

Publisher: Eidos

Price: £34.99

Format: DS

Considering the DS is the perfect platform for strategy titles, we've certainly had to wait a fair amount of time for them to appear. Fortunately, the latest *Age Of Empires*, with Greek, Norse and Egyptian cultures all covered in the game, looks like it should be more than worth the wait. If this is half as good as the recently released *Civilization* we'll be very happy indeed.


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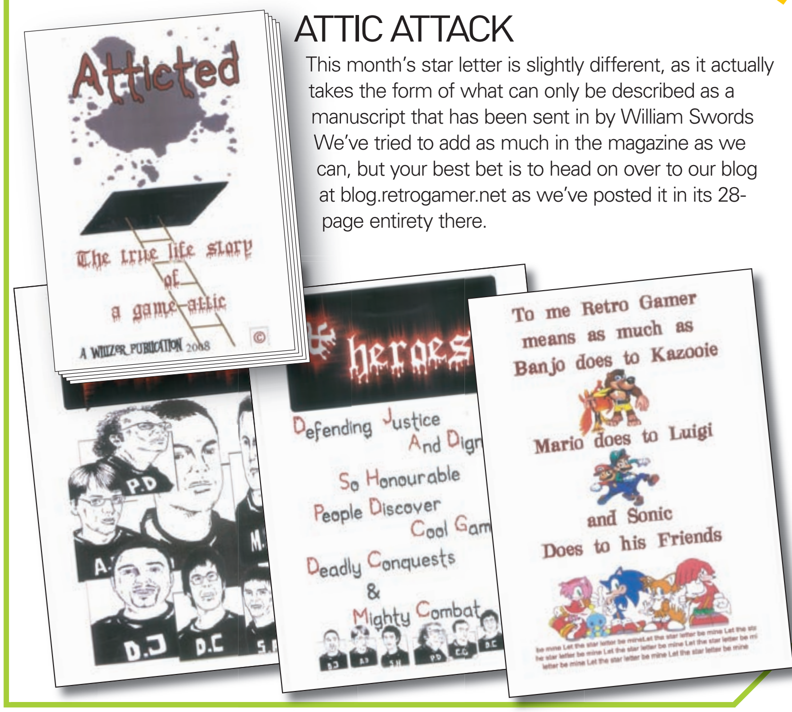
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STAR LETTER

ATTIC ATTACK

This month's star letter is slightly different, as it actually takes the form of what can only be described as a manuscript that has been sent in by William Swords We've tried to add as much in the magazine as we can, but your best bet is to head on over to our blog at blog.retrogamer.net as we've posted it in its 28-page entirety there.



MAME CAB REVISITED

Dear Retro Gamer,
I was delighted to see my letter printed in **Retro Gamer** Load>53, featuring a picture of my home-constructed jukebox/MAME cabinet. I have now modified it to incorporate a centrally mounted joystick, which makes it compatible with almost all arcade games, including *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves*.

To modify the cab I simply removed the middle button and fitted it with an eight-way E-stick. No cutting was required, just a few additional wires and configuring. As you can see from the picture I have included, it's now possible to use a left-handed or right-handed joystick and buttons.

I was also pleased to see that Load>54 – the one with *OutRun*, my favourite videogame of all time, on the front cover – came complete with a massive arcade feature inside. All I can say is thank you, **Retro Gamer**. All my arcade childhood favourites were brought back to life upon opening that magazine and I can't tell you how happy I was to see them all again. Keep up the fantastic work.
Kind regards.



Simon Mitchell, Exeter

That's shaping up really nicely, Simon. We're glad you loved all the arcade coverage in issue 54. Hopefully the Gauntlet *and* Rampage *features this month will be right up your street as well.*

PC REQUEST

Dear Retro Gamer,
As a fairly recent subscriber to your excellent magazine, I've noticed that during the past seven or eight months, there has been little old PC-game coverage. Now, while I'm an avid retro console fan, I also love my old PC titles, and I'd really love to see a feature on some of these appear in the magazine. The games that had the greatest impact upon me, and were among my most played, are *UFO: Enemy Unknown*, and *XCOM: Terror From The Deep*, so it would be wonderful if you could cover them at some stage. Not



» Jon Eckersley is keen for Retro Gamer to feature a few more groundbreaking PC titles. We'll see what we can do, Jon.



EVERY MONTH, ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy **Retro Gamer** T-shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a snazzy new **Retro Gamer** binder. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

only were these games truly groundbreaking at the time (the latter being more than a little difficult to finish), but they also continue to stand up well against many current titles. Any chance of a lovely feature appearing in the near future?

Jon Eckersley, via email

Glad you're enjoying the magazine, Jon, and don't worry, we're planning to include plenty more PC coverage in the future. With regard to your XCOM *and* UFO *requests, we'll definitely look into it and hopefully have something for you in a later issue.*

STARSTRIKE REMAKE

Hi Darran,

First off, well done to everyone at **Retro Gamer** for such a great magazine. I've been an avid reader since issue one, and loved the Imagine Publishing revamp. Being a bit of a fan of the old sit-down cab, I especially enjoyed the recent series on the *Star Wars* games. Your articles shed new light on what happened behind the scenes and I really appreciated that. When you're a kid, you don't really think about these things, but 20 to 30 years on you can only marvel at what these guys achieved and the vision that they must have had, since nothing like this ever went before.

As I say, I was quite a fan of the *Star Wars* games, and loved *3D Starstrike* on the Spectrum, which was the nearest thing you could get at the time for 8-bit computers. A few years ago I thought it would be a good idea to write a remake of *Starstrike* for PC. Well, it took a little longer than expected, but this week I finally launched it and thought you might be interested. I have made a small website where it can be downloaded and where I have put up a few pages about the history of the original game. It's available at www.starstrike.urbaninteractive.net.

Andrew Nixon, via email

The Star Wars *article we ran received fairly mixed reviews, with some readers feeling that we were simply covering old ground (a similar article had already appeared during the Live Publishing days). We have to remain aware of new readers who may not have read earlier issues of the magazine, however, and due to the popularity of the franchise, we decided to include it. Your* Starstrike *remake looks pretty good, so we'll try and get it reviewed in a future issue.*

From the forum

EVERY MONTH, **RETRO GAMER** ASKS A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTS THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW...
YOUR FAVOURITE CASTLEVANIA GAME?



ID: Stranger81
Mine has to be *Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge* on Game Boy. The level design is the best on any of the series, and in my opinion the Game Boy versions never really got the respect they deserved.

ID: HEAVYface
Symphony Of The Night. No question.

ID: TheShend
Symphony Of The Night, I played the Japanese Saturn conversion first, but I must admit the PSone original beats it hands down. As a Saturn boy, it pains me to say it.

ID: random_dave
My first still holds a special place in my heart, and that was *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest* on NES. However, the one I end up going back to is *Super Castlevania IV* on SNES.

ID: hydr0x
I was hooked on *Super Castlevania IV* from the moment the fantastic music started, but I just have to go with *Symphony Of The Night*. It's pure gaming perfection and doesn't suffer from the DS release's more childish character design.

ID: The Master
I haven't played a single one. Gosh, what a kerfuffin' rebel. I did live in a genuine 15th Century castle once, though.

ID: bonerlaw
Definitely *Symphony Of The Night*. Why did I sell my limited-edition version for £10?

ID: khisanth
Circle Of The Moon on Game Boy Advance since it was my first. *Symphony Of The Night* might be better if i can be bothered to play it.

ID: Tapey297
The only one I have played is the *Simon's Quest* LCD game from Tiger. I must have spent at least ten hours playing this on Christmas Day and Boxing Day alone.

ID: Mootown
Super Castlevania IV was clearly the best, none of that RPG rubbish. Left to right, get to the end. All games should follow that simple rule. Although I did still hypocritically finish *SOTN* on both Saturn and PSone.

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IMAGINE PUBLISHING

PPA

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier, as all you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. Darran's built up a pretty decent Lynx collection already!



Head on over to the excellent **retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php.



Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.

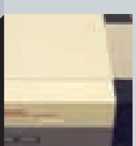


Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

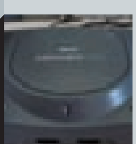
EBAY BARGAINS



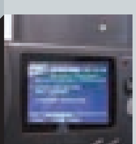
■ As well as receiving a pristine Spectrum +2, the winner of this auction received 36 games, and all for just £28.91. Bargain!



■ While NESs always appear on eBay, it's rare that you get one in mint condition with a load of games. All for just £32.56.



■ This Neo-Geo CD ended up going for £170.67, despite the fact it was supplied with no pads or actual games. Amazing scenes.



■ We've been aiming to pick up a Sega Nomad, so kicked ourselves when one recently sold for £87.45. We're still annoyed.



■ Famicom Twins rarely appear so it's hardly surprising to learn that this one went for £132.76. Had some great games as well…

3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40 - £60
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ACORN ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

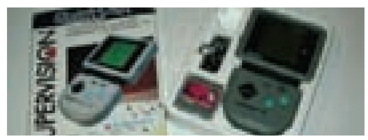
AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)

FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50 - £200 ($92 - $368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

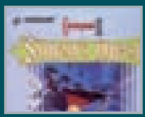
MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

PC-6###	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

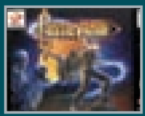
Retro Gamer will be sifting through pages of eBay and reporting back on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. This month we've been seeking out Castlevania titles…



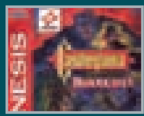
CASTLEVANIA: SIMON'S QUEST
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£13**
Ended at **£21.26**



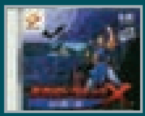
CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£28.56**



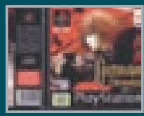
CASTLEVANIA
System: **N64**
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£4.89**



CASTLEVANIA: BLOODLINES
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£31.98**



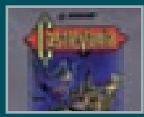
RONDO OF BLOOD
System: **PC-Engine Super CD-ROM**
Normally sells for **£50**
Ended at **£61.46**



CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
System: **PlayStation**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£16.67**



SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
System: **PlayStation**
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£36.90**



CASTLEVANIA
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£6.01**

PC-8801	£20 ($37)
PC-9801	£35 ($65)
PC-FX	£50 ($92)
PC-ENGINE	£55 ($101)
PC-ENGINE GT	£70+ ($129+)
TURBOGRAFX-16	£30 ($55)
TURBO EXPRESS	£50 ($92)
SUPERGRAFX	£80 ($147)
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	£50+ ($92+)
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	£120 ($221)
DUO-R	£80 ($147)

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	£60 ($111)
FAMICOM AV	£40 ($74)
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	£70 ($129)
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	£100 ($184)
GAME & WATCH	£1+ ($2+)
GAME BOY B/W	£5 ($9)
GAME BOY POCKET	£8 ($15)
GAME BOY COLOR	£12 ($22)
GAME BOY ADVANCE	£25 ($46)
N64	£10 ($18)
N64 DD	£150+ ($276+)
NES (TOASTER)	£15 ($28)
NES (DOG BONE)	£50 ($92)
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	£20 ($37)
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	£50+ ($92+)
VIRTUAL BOY	£80 ($147)



PHILIPS

CD-I	£20+ ($37+)
CD-I 450/500	£30 ($55)
VIDEOPAC G7000	£10 ($18)
VIDEOPAC G7400	£20 ($37)

SEGA

32X	£35 ($65)
DREAMCAST	£25 ($46)
GAME GEAR	£15 ($28)
SG-1000	£50-£150 ($80-$260)
SC-3000	£50 ($92)
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	£10 ($18)



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	£10 ($18)
TERADRIVE	£100 ($184)
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	£25 ($46)
GENESIS 3	£35 ($65)
NOMAD	£100 ($184)
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	£100+ ($184+)
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	£50+ ($92+)
PICO	£20 ($37)
SATURN	£30 ($55)
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	£50+ ($92+)

SINCLAIR

ZX80	£200 ($368)
ZX81	£70 ($129)
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	£10 ($18)
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	£40 ($74)
ZX SPECTRUM+	£35 ($65)
ZX SPECTRUM +2	£35 ($65)
ZX SPECTRUM +3	£40 ($74)

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	£150+ ($276+)
NEO-GEO MVS	£70 ($129)
NEO-GEO CD	£100 ($184)
NEO-GEO CDZ	£80+ ($147+)
NEO-GEO POCKET	£20 ($37)
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	£35 ($65)

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

THIS MONTH WE'VE SPOKEN TO NINTENDO FAN GARY BRAWN, WHO HAS EVERYTHING FROM A COMPLETE NES COLLECTION TO A PIKACHU N64…



» I'm Gary Brawn from Chester. When I'm not playing Nintendo I can be found studying a Physics PhD at Manchester Uni.



» This collection of games is probably one of the easiest to put together with there only being 14 released US Virtual Boy games, however, the *Mario's Tennis* box is quite rare being a display-only box. Some of the games, namely *Wario Land* and *Mario Clash*, are well worth a playthrough as well.



» These are my SNESs from around the globe. I have two US systems, the UK version and the Japanese Super Famicom and Super Famicom Jr, along with the Satellaview add-on.



» Here we have my complete UK NES collection. This wasn't easy to put together due to hard-to-find titles like *Miracle Piano* and *Stack-Up*.



» The Virtual Boy has to be my favourite console just because it was such a departure from the 'normal consoles' of the Nineties, and it is the one console people will always ask about and have a go on.



If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about then contact us at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

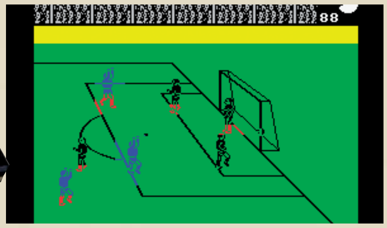
THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 1984



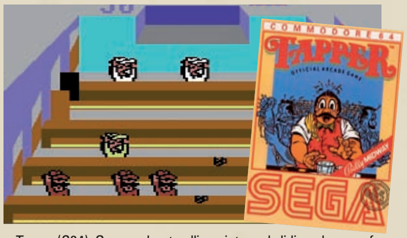
DECEMBER 1984 – Flan me up, keyboard issues for Sinclair, Airwolf takes to the skies, cheap MSX, even cheaper Atari, Tech Ted takes on Sir Lancelot, and Match Day arrives. Richard Burton lays one off and toe-punts the winger into the crowd



» The Atari 800XL, updated and proving popular. Not surprising given it was half the price of an MSX computer.



» *Match Day* (Spectrum): Diving goalkeepers that you can control, headers, and a rare semblance of realism.



» *Tapper* (C64): Games about pulling pints and sliding glasses of beer down bars don't get much better than this…

Enterprise Computers, the firm formerly known as Samurai, which changed its name to Elan and then back to Enterprise via the comedic sponge-based offering of Flan, finally announced, after one of the most drawn-out home micro releases ever, that it would start distribution of its Enterprise 64K machine this month.

A limited number of units were available for Christmas with the vast majority of the manufacturing being in February 1985. And to add insult to injury, the machine's price tag was raised by £50 to £249.95.

The Spectrum Plus, which arrived the previous month, was already suffering quality issues. Several retailers found that machines were being returned with problems such as loose keys on the newly styled keyboard. Ironically, one of the main reason for producing the Spectrum Plus was to replace the old rubbery keyboard with something more professional looking.

Sinclair should have been more worried about the news that the first in its range of electric cars was due to be made available in January. Tentatively priced at £400, the Sinclair C5 was a six-foot-long piece of white plastic with a top speed of 15mph. In principle a good idea, but would the finished article persuade commuters to forego the joys of the petrol engine for a battery-powered three-wheeled canoe?



» In the morning, why not stuff your face with marshmallow power pills for that E-number-fuelled day ahead.

If you've ever suffered a power failure with the end of a game in sight, then the Nike SP from Cambridge Microelectronics is for you. This £20 battery backup system for Spectrum left you up to 30 minutes to finish what you're doing. It also contained a mains filter to stop any interference, proving particularly handy when you're loading a game and your next-door neighbour cranks up his lawnmower. Turf-based interference was a thing of the past.

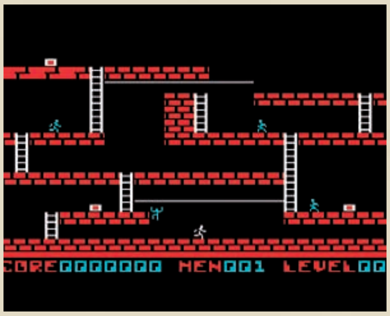
MSX manufacturers reduced the price of the computers with the realisation that the system wasn't competitive against the likes of the cheaper C64 and Spectrum. Indeed, even Atari announced a price cut to its 800XL computer, pricing it at an attractive £129. Even with its price reductions, some MSX systems were still twice the price of the Ataris.

This month Ocean released one of its finest Spectrum titles. Programmed by John Ritman, football simulator *Match Day* was far superior to anything before it. Strangely, Ocean stated that it had no plans to release the game on any other machine. Naturally, this resulted in versions being made available for C64, Amstrad, and BBC among others.

Airwolf, an official game based on the TV series featuring a swanky black helicopter, was finally released. There had been some confusion over who owned the licence to the title as Ocean had been advertising its *Airwolf* game for months. Meanwhile, Elite Systems also claimed to have licensing rights and had also started advertising its official game available for Spectrum, C64 and, Amstrad. During December Elite's *Airwolf* advertising featured glossy double-page adverts while Ocean's were mysteriously withdrawn. Presumably a rather well-paid suit had pointed out some legal issues to Ocean and with that its game and adverts faded away.

Software Projects' latest offering to gamers was *Lode Runner*, a platform-and-ladders game with the added bonus of a level editor to recreate your own unique version. It would be available for Spectrum and BBC.

Meanwhile, Matthew Smith and Software Projects boss Alan Maton were devising what should feature in the follow-up to *Jet Set Willy* – presumably these were the preliminary ideas



» *Lode Runner* (BBC): At first glance this looks utter pap, but the stick-man graphics belie the superb gameplay beneath.



» *Airwolf* (Spectrum): This insanely difficult game involved shooting a wall until boredom set in or your power pack melted.

1984

DECEMBER NEWS

19 December saw a historic agreement finally signed between Britain and China for the handover of Hong Kong to China after 155 years of British rule over the colony. British prime minister Margaret Thatcher and Chinese premier Zhao Ziyang signed the Joint Sino-British Declaration, which would see Hong Kong transferred to Chinese control in July 1997.

On 29 December Rajiv Gandhi won a landslide victory in the Indian general election just two months after the assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi. His Congress Party was sworn in with a huge majority, but he lasted just one term in office before he was tragically assassinated by suicide bomber Thenmuli Rajaratnam in May 1991.



» Rajiv Gandhi was the new prime minister of India. Meeting the same fate as his mother, he was assassinated.

There was more misery for India on 3 December when 40 tons of toxic gas were accidentally released from the Union Carbide chemical plant in Bhopal, killing an estimated twenty thousand people with a further 250,000 suffering serious illness from the gas. Methyl isocyanate, leaked from a storage tank when a release valve failed under pressure.

31 December proved a devastating end to the year for Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen when he crashed his Corvette through a dry-stone wall on a sharp corner. He lost his left arm and his no-claims bonus.



» Drummer Rick Allen may have lost an arm but he can still pull of a decent paradiddle.



» *Technician Ted* (Amstrad CPC): Ladies and gentleman, please be upstanding for the hardest platform game in the known universe.

for *Megatree*. Smith wanted it to feature large 16x16 pixel sprites and have a special hardware add-on for use with or without the game.

There was further platforming joy for Spectrum and Amstrad owners with an excess of quality jumping material for the systems. For Amstrad, rather belatedly but still very welcome, was *Manic Miner* by Software Projects but released on the Amsoft label.



» *Sir Lancelot* (Spectrum): While *Manic Miner* took the glory, this overlooked masterpiece of 16K coding was a quiet classic.

Also available for CPC, the underrated and supremely brick-hard *Technician Ted* from Hewson Consultants. It was set in a silicon-chip factory where you had to complete a set of tasks in an allotted time. *Tech Ted* was also available to Spectrum owners who also had the rarity of an excellent 16K game release. Considering the memory restrictions, Melbourne House's *Sir Lancelot* was superb.

Database Publications revealed that it would be introducing a new magazine in the new year. *Computing With The Amstrad* (*CWTA*) appeared on newsstands ten months before both *Amstrad Action* and *Amtix*. With that sort of head-start you'd think it would have capitalised on the CPC-owning readership more proficiently, particularly when they only had the rather stuffy *Amstrad Computer User* for reading material. Unfortunately, *CWTA* and Database didn't and once the big two had arrived on the scene, they were pushed into fourth in the pecking order of CPC magazines.

Computer & Video Games plumped for *Boulder Dash* (Statesoft, C64) as its Game Of The Month. Closely followed by *Braxx Bluff* (Micromega, Spectrum), *Black Knight* (Interdisk, C64), *Jet Pac* (Ultimate, BBC), *Tapper* (US Gold, C64/Spectrum), *Ancipital* (Llamasoft, C64) and *Raid Over Moscow* (US Gold, C64).

The *Crash* reviewers smashed *Skool Daze* (Microsphere), *3D Starstrike* (Realtime Software), *Sir Lancelot* (Melbourne House), *Tir Na Nog* (Gargoyle Games), *Dark Star* (Design Design), *Turmoil* (Bug Byte) and *Out Of The Shadows* (Mizar Computing).

Big K featured *Hi Bouncer* (Mirrorsoft, BBC), *Son Of Blagger* (Alligata, BBC), *Laserwarp* (Amsoft, Amstrad), *Battlezone* (Quicksilva, Spectrum), *Aquanaut* (Interceptor Software, C64) and *Dune Rider* (Micropower, BBC).

THIS MONTH IN…



BIG K

Big K featured an interview with Steve Turner, who had recently released *Avalon*, an attractive-looking game labelled as a '3D adventure movie', by Hewson Consultants. It was certainly difficult and this point was emphasised when Turner mentioned it took him 20 hours to complete the game… and he programmed it.





MICRO ADVENTURER

This month *Micro Adventurer* stepped into the world of Celtic mythology title *Tir Na Nog*. According to the instructions, the hero of the story, Cuchulainn, happens to be dead and as a boy was called Sedanta. Quite why he was named after a second-rate TV sports channel no ones knows.





SINCLAIR USER

Although saturation point had surely been reached, Matthew Smith was still filling the pages of computer magazines. This time a nice interview with him and Alan Maton ran through the usual lines of questioning. But the full-page illustration by Software Projects artist, the sadly departed Roger Tissyman, particularly stood out.



CHARTS

NOVEMBER 1984



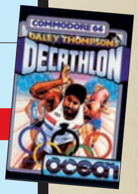
MUSIC

1. The Power Of Love (Frankie Goes To Hollywood)
2. The Riddle (Nik Kershaw)
3. We All Stand Together (Paul McCartney)
4. Like A Virgin (Madonna)
5. Do They Know Its Christmas? (Band Aid)



SPECTRUM

1. Daley Thompson's Decathlon (Ocean)
2. Beach Head (US Gold)
3. Monty Mole (Gremlin Graphics)
4. Jet Set Willy (Software Projects)
5. Sherlock (Melbourne House))



COMMODORE 64

1. Daley Thompson's Decathlon (Ocean)
2. Jet Set Willy (Software Projects)
3. Chiller (Mastertronic)
4. Beach Head (US Gold)
5. Zaxxon (US Gold)

BBC

1. Elite (Acornsoft)
2. Sabre Wulf (Ultimate)
3. Manic Miner (Software Projects)
4. Scrabble (Leisure Genius)
5. Football Manager (Addictive Games)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MARCH 1991



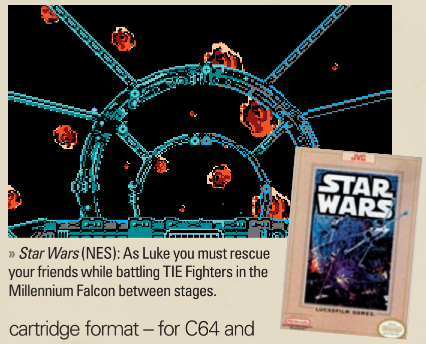
MARCH 1991 – let handheld combat commence, Ocean is tops, Speedball does the rounds, brain surgery for beginners, Star Wars, blobbiness abounds and Mario goes to the movies. Richard Burton dons a false moustache and sorts out his wrench…



» Redesigned, lighter, sleeker and half the price of the original version in the UK, it's America's newly released Lynx 2.



» *A Boy And His Blob* (NES): With the aid of a jellybean, your alien blob friend transforms into a bridge. Handy.



» *Star Wars* (NES): As Luke you must rescue your friends while battling TIE Fighters in the Millennium Falcon between stages.

Handheld console prices were slashed this month with reduction and counter-reduction from Atari and Sega. The much-awaited Game Gear finally got an official UK release date (late-April). Surprisingly, the starting price was cut from £125 to the more palatable sum of £99.99.

Atari, having already dropped the price of its Lynx system by £50 to £130 just a few weeks previous, must have suspected Sega was planning something similar and hastily lopped another £30 from the price of the Lynx to match its rival's asking price.

Although Amstrad's GX4000 console saw a £20 reduction, making the machine £79.99, they still couldn't give them away.

In America, there was a new Lynx on the block. The console had been redesigned to make it smaller, lighter and sleeker than the original. It also came in at just $99, approximately half the price of the original system being sold in the UK.

Meanwhile, American Game Gear owners heard news of the production of a third-party add-on that would allow Sega Master System games to be played on the Game Gear. Although the Mastergear Converter seemed like a good idea, there were flaws, the main problems were that Master System games were designed to be played on a TV rather than a handheld-sized screen, as well as a much smaller colour palette, resulting in numerous games being rendered unplayable because detail was lost.

The annual InDin Awards, the Oscars of the gaming industry, were presented. Among the winners for 1990 were *Speedball 2* for Arcade Game Of The Year (Bitmap Brothers); *Captive* for Overall Game Of The Year (Mindscape); *F/A-18 Interceptor* for Budget Game Of The Year (EA Software Classics); *Zero* for European Magazine Of The Year; Core Design for Developer Of The Year; and Ocean for Overall Software House Of The Year.

And Ocean's good form looked set to continue with its next impending release, *Toki*. This quirky game, converted from the arcade original, sees you transformed into a monkey by an evil wizard who has also kidnapped your girlfriend. Your task is to find the wizard's castle, get the girl and become human again.

Although it was advertised by Ocean as available for the Amiga, ST, Spectrum and – on cartridge format – for C64 and Amstrad, CPC and Spectrum versions were never made available.

Announced for release in America on NES was *Klashball*, a futuristic sports game that bore more than a passing resemblance to hit Bitmap Brothers game *Speedball*. The reason for this was that *Klashball* WAS *Speedball*. Unfortunately 'speedball' in the US means something else entirely. The non-videogaming variety of speedball was a cocaine-and-heroin drug combination that proved particularly lethal, taking the lives of several high-profile stars including John Belushi and River Phoenix. Probably wise to change the name then.

As legendary Liverpool football manager Bill Shankly kind of once said: 'Some people believe retro gaming is a matter of life and death, it is much more important than that'. *Mindscape* decided to test his theory with its forthcoming release, *Life & Death II: The Brain*.

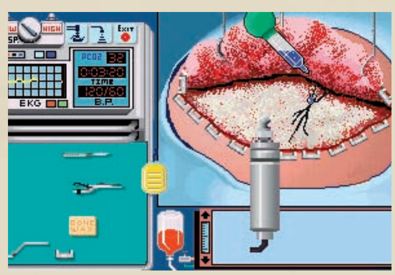
This sequel sees you taking charge of the scalpels, a CAT-scan machine, and a bone drill as you attempt to diagnose your patients' head and brain complaints. Do they have a brain embolism, or is it a Cider Quench-induced ice-lolly headache? Chunks of gooey



» *Speedball 2* (Amiga): Superb sequel and a truly magnificent two-player game. Those Bitmap Brothers were the tops.



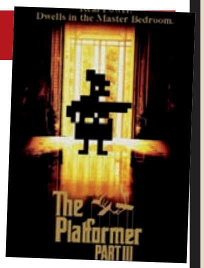
» *Bomberman* (PC-Engine): As a single-player game it's great, but with two players battling away, it's exceptional.



» *Life & Death II: The Brain* (PC): If delving wrist-deep in cranium juice is your thing, then this is a no-brainer…

1991

MARCH NEWS



» I'm going to make you and offer you can't refuse… a Sega Saturn, KFC Family Bucket, a keg of beer, and cake… all for just £3.

On 14 March the Birmingham Six were freed from jail, their sentences quashed after the Court of Appeal heard there had been irregularities in the original court case. The six Irish men had been found guilty of planning and executing a bombing campaign for the IRA in 1974 in which two Birmingham pubs were targeted killing 21 people.

The inquest verdict for the Hillsborough football stadium disaster came on 28 March. The event saw 96 Liverpool football fans crushed to death during the FA Cup semi-final between Nottingham Forest and Liverpool in April 1989. A jury returned a verdict of accidental death while relatives of the victims sought a verdict of unlawful killing against the South Yorkshire Police Force whose officers had opened the gate that led hundreds of Liverpool supporters into an already packed Leppings Lane Terrace, the scene of the tragedy.



» The Birmingham Six. Released after unjustly serving 16 years for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

For cinemagoers March brought premieres of complete polar opposites. 8 March saw The Godfather Part III released in the UK, while on 22 March America witnessed the premiere of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret Of The Ooze*. One's a classic and one's a stinker. Can you guess which is which?





» *Toki* (Amiga): A perfect conversion of the arcade game and certainly the best ever game to feature a spitting monkey.

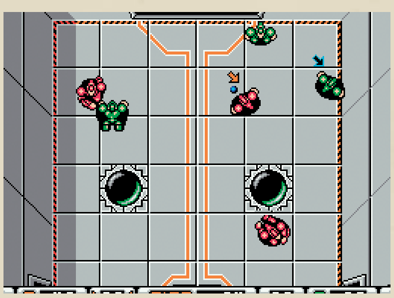


» *Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure* (Mega Drive): Japanese weirdness wins through again with this peculiar platformer.

brain material and skull fragments were splattered all over your PC with the Amiga and ST conversions being prepped for development.

Lucasfilm Games revealed it was developing a game for NES based on Lucas's little-known sci-fi flick *Star Wars*. In it you would be able to take control of Luke, Leia, Han, Obi-Wan, C3PO and R2-D2, each having their own strengths and weaknesses, which you must discover and utilise in different situations. Future versions for SNES and PC were also planned.

David Crane, the programmer responsible for such gaming delicacies as *Ghostbusters* and *Pitfall*, made it known that his newest creation, *A Boy And His Blob: Trouble On Blobolonia*, follows the story of a shape-shifting alien trying to return to its planet to sort out some blob-



» *Klashball* (NES): *Speedball* unfortunately shares its name with the slang for a particularly potent drug cocktail.

based trouble. Your job is to help him, primarily with jellybeans. When Blob eats a jellybean he turns from a gooey mass into another object, such as a ladder, to help you in your adventure. *A Boy And His Blob* was available on NES within weeks and proved an eccentric but enjoyable mix of exploration and lateral thinking.

The much-mooted but finally-ready-to-go-into-production movie version of the *Super Mario Bros* videogame was set to begin filming within a matter of months. Danny DeVito was originally cast as the pint-sized moustachioed plumber, but, after suffering from a severe bout of common sense, he was later replaced by Bob Hoskins. The film was finally released in the UK in July 1993, scarring a nation of film-lovers in the process.

Computer & Video Games dished out its C&VG Hit awards to *Final Fight* (Capcom, SNES), *Bomberman* (Hudson Soft, PC-Engine), *Son Of Dracula* (Naxatsoft, PC-Engine), *Turrican II* (Rainbow Arts, Amiga), *Creatures* (Thalamus, C64), *Super Mario World* (Nintendo, Super Famicom), *Solar Jetman* (Rare, NES), *Snake, Rattle N Roll* (Rare, NES) and *Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure* (Sega, Mega Drive).

Zero stuck its Zero Hero badge of honour firmly on the lapels of *Links* (US Gold, Amiga, PC, ST), *Operation Stealth* (Dephine, PC) and *Elvira: Mistress Of The Dark* (Accolade, Amiga).

THIS MONTH IN...



ZERO

In a feature called Max Pax (about game compilations rather than that watery excuse for tea British Rail used to serve), six of the finest videogame collections were put through the mill. *The Power Pack* (Beau Jolly, Amiga/ST) just pipped the competition with games such as *Xenon II* and *Bloodwych*.





THE ONE

The penultimate issue featured a departure from the norm with a feature on the 38th International Toy Fair. The Ninja Turtles bandwagon rolled on with every conceivable vehicle, action figure and novelty made available. Sega also officially previewed its Game Gear console at the show.





COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

C&VG reviewed an imported version of *Super Mario World* for Super Famicom, which resulted in the reviewers getting a bit over excited. They awarded the game an impressive 96%. Not bad for a game that was a freebie in the Super Famicom package.



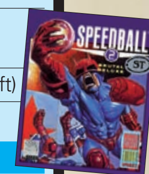
CHARTS

MARCH 1991



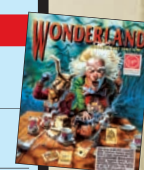
AMIGA

1. Powermonger (Electronic Arts)
2. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
3. Indianapolis 500 (Electronic Arts)
4. Harpoon (Mirrorsoft)
5. Elvira (Accolade)



ATARI ST

1. Speedball 2 (Mirrorsoft)
2. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
3. Powermonger (Electronic Arts)
4. Prince Of Persia (Domark/Broderbund)
5. M1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)



PC

1. Wonderland (Virgin/ Magnetic Scrolls)
2. Wing Commander (Origin/Mindscape)
3. Silent Service III (Microprose)
4. King's Quest V (Sierra)
5. Ultima VI (Origin/Mindscape)

MUSIC

1. Should I Stay Or Should I Go (The Clash)
2. The Stonk (Hale & Pace and The Stonkers)
3. The One And Only (Chesney Hawkes)
4. Joyride (Roxette)
5. Rhythm Of My Heart (Rod Stewart)



01

retro GAMER.net READERS REVIVAL

GUARDIAN HEROES

THE HIT BRAWLER GETS THE READER REVIVAL BALL ROLLING



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1996
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SATURN
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £25

RETROBATE PROFILE

- » **NAME:** PHIL HARRISON
- » **JOINED:** 18 AUG 2008
- » **LOCATION:** WHALEY BRIDGE
- » **OCCUPATION:** SCIENTIST
- » **FAV GAMES SYSTEM:** SATURN
- » **BIO:** A HUGE STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE FAN AND ABSOLUTELY GAY FOR THE SEGA SATURN



HISTORY

A year into Sega Saturn ownership (cheers, mum), I bought myself a scrolling beat-'em-up. The title was *Guardian Heroes* – a game from Treasure (hello *Gunstar Heroes, Alien Soldier*), a scrolling beat-'em-up (I love 'em) and on the mighty Saturn! Guaranteed win?

Win!

If I were to describe this title with a single word it would be 'rich'. It was rich in every aspect of what it did and it did it fabulously… er… richly.

We had the presentation, which was bright, colourful and came with a very attractive anime intro cartoon. The characters were very stylised with the big lead Han possessing tiny wrists and ankles but mahoosive Popeye-style muscles, all the better to carry that ridiculous sword with.

Enemies were varied and plentiful, with dozens filling up the screen in all their ugly shapes and sizes. You could also jump between three planes to cope – fore, middle and background – and the level also zoomed out and in to take account of everything as players battled at each end.

There were also tons of levels, at the end of each you were given options (centred on the story between Sky and Earth Spirits) of where to go next, with each leading you to vastly different levels, endings, enemies and bosses. The replayability was huge. Your performance in the level also awarded points that you could dole out to boost six different traits of your character.

One story path gave you an impervious, golden-armoured undead warrior to command. But let's not kid ourselves, the only command that really mattered was 'Berserk', where he went utterly ape shit on anything nearby and finished off with a screen-levelling nuclear-style self explosion, screaming as the screen filled with orange and yellow. Easily the greatest NPC a game has ever had.

Guardian Heroes also made use of the six-player multitap, meaning you and your chums could throw any of the main characters or any enemies you defeated from the story (including bosses) into a coliseum for a huge ruck! Amazing times, amazing game.

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EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL CHOOSE ONE LUCKY READER'S GAME PROFILE TO APPEAR IN THE MAGAZINE. IF YOU WANT ONE OF YOURS TO FEATURE THEN BE SURE TO SIGN UP TO **RETROGAMER.NET**



RUNNING THE GAUNTLET



STANDING PROUD AND TALL IN ITS CUSTOMISED CABINET, ATARI'S GAUNTLET CUT AN IMPOSING FIGURE IN ARCADES AND HELPED SPAWN A MULTIPLAYER PHENOMENA. BATTLE-AXE IN HAND, **DARRAN JONES** BRAVES DARK AND DANGEROUS CORRIDORS WHILE LOOKING BACK AT 23 YEARS OF DUNGEON DELVING

Atari's *Gauntlet* franchise has been entertaining gamers now for over two decades. Despite somewhat questionable origins – more of which later – it delivered a multiplayer gaming experience that few other games of the time could match, and, over the years, has continued to evolve while always staying true to its core roots.

With a new handheld adventure heading to the DS courtesy of Eidos and developer Backbone Entertainment, there's never been a better time to look back at Atari's classic franchise. So as Julie Andrews once sang: "Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start."

When *Gauntlet* first appeared in the arcades in 1985 there was nothing else quite like it. Sure many games existed for multiple players, but none of them ignited the passions in those playing like *Gauntlet*. Set in an absolute behemoth of an arcade cabinet and powered by 68010 and M6502 processors, arguments could typically break out before the game had even started, simply due to players fighting over which character they'd get to control.

Four heroic adventurers were available: Thor the Warrior, Questor the Elf, Merlin the Wizard and Thyra the Valkyrie, and each came with their own skills. Thor was insanely strong at hand-to-hand combat, the fleet-footed Questor could run rings around other characters, Thyra had strong armour and is wrongly considered to be the most powerful character in the game (it's actually Questor), while the yellow-robed Merlin had access to the strongest magic.

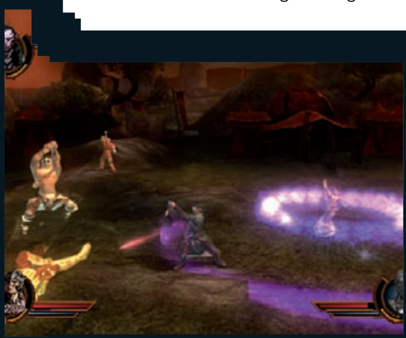
Once play started it was just a case of trying to get as far into the dungeon as possible and clearing out *Gauntlet*'s numerous foes. While teamwork always offered the best way to proceed, it was constantly put to the test due to the sheer amount of food, treasure and other goodies that were scattered liberally throughout each stage. One moment players were standing firm against a barrage of energy-depleting ghosts, the next they were screaming at colleagues for stealing treasure or precious food while everyone else was doing all the hard work. Of course, gameplay mechanics such as this are two-a-penny nowadays, but back then they felt refreshingly new. Unless of course you happened to be John Palevich or one of the many Atari 8-bit owners who had played his game *Dandy*…

First available in 1983, a good two years before *Gauntlet*'s arcade debut, *Dandy* utilised the same 2D top-down viewpoint, allowed for four players to play at once and featured potions, food and monster-spawning generators, all of which, later appeared in Ed Logg's classic arcade game. Originally called *Thesis Of Terror* it started off as Palevich's MIT bachelor's thesis, before becoming *Dandy* while Palevich was working at Atari. *Dandy* was eventually released on Atari's Program Exchange division (which distributed software via a quarterly mail-order catalogue), where it became a huge success. Geared towards teamwork, it even boasted an excellent level editor that allowed would-be Dungeon Masters to create their own tombs of terror for friends to explore.

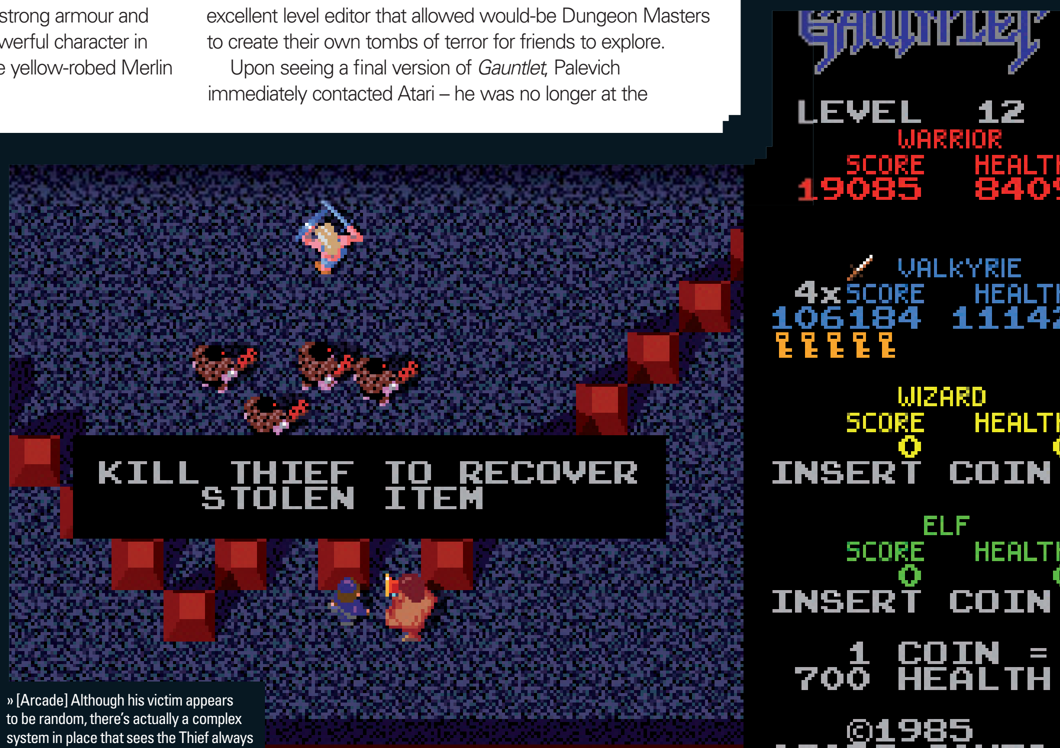
Upon seeing a final version of *Gauntlet*, Palevich immediately contacted Atari – he was no longer at the











» [Arcade] Although his victim appears to be random, there's actually a complex system in place that sees the Thief always stealing from the richest player.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET



company at that point – and began taking steps to ensure that he retained rights to *Dandy* and that he received a credit as the original game designer. While the latter didn't happen, Palevich was supplied with an original arcade machine and eventually sold the rights to *Dandy* on to Electronic Dreams Software, who was, ironically, later sued by Atari when it based its own 8-bit versions of *Dandy* on *Gauntlet* and not Palevich's original game. Logg may not have created the original concept, but there's no denying the influence his title has had on a generation of gamers.

Of course, when you consider the period that the classic dungeon delver was released, it should come as no surprise that it ended up being so popular – mainly because fantasy and sweaty barbarians appeared to be everywhere. *Dungeons & Dragons* was at the height of its popularity (back then it was even possible to buy the game in your local Tescos), sword and sorcery films – *Conan The Barbarian*, *The Sword And The Sorcerer*, *The Beastmaster* – appeared to be getting released on a weekly basis, while JRR Tolkien's *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy remained as popular as ever.

So when *Gauntlet* appeared, two years after *Dandy*'s inception, and allowed arcade-goers to take on the role of a mighty warrior, speedy elf, tough Valkyrie and powerful wizard, gamers happily lapped up the on-screen action and *Gauntlet*'s 23-year legacy began.

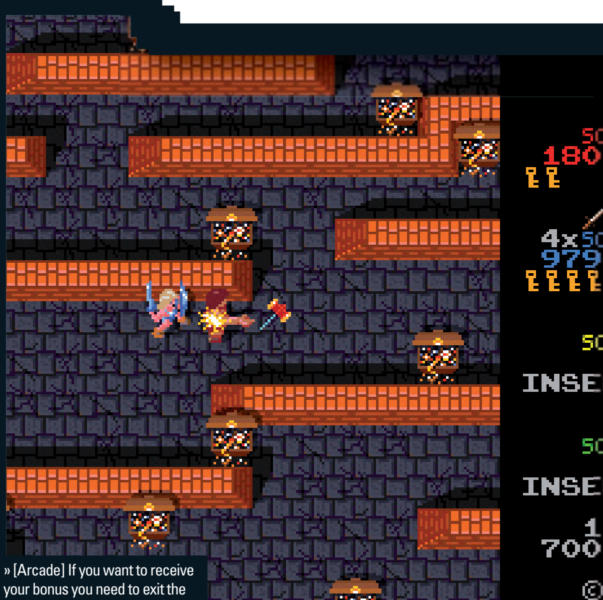
Although Logg reused many of the gameplay mechanics from *Dandy*, his decision to have the player constantly lose health (roughly one point for every second of real-time) was either a stroke of genius or simply a cynical attempt to part you from your money as quickly as possible. Nevertheless it instantly set you up against the clock, created a sense of impending doom and gave you an important reason for finding as many people to play with as you could, as the more people in your group, the greater progress you could potentially make. A constantly depleting health bar wasn't the only mechanic that set *Gauntlet* apart from its elder peer, as Logg's dungeons often gave you a fair amount of choice and lacked the linearity of the earlier *Dandy*, as the opening stage gave you multiple exits to choose from – allowing you to skip earlier ones in favour of those with a higher difficulty level (and potential greater rewards). Another addition was the inclusion of various potions that granted you everything from stronger armour to better shot power whenever they were consumed and the ability to use teleporters. By far the biggest inclusion, however, was the huge amount of digitised speech *Gauntlet* boasted. A booming voice (an unseen Dungeon Master perhaps?) would recount what was happening on screen and his advice or taunts would continually spur you and the other players on, sometimes as a team, sometimes to punish another player. No one wanted to hear "Elf has shot the food" when they were controlling Questor and had a group of angry players gunning after them because they'd already shot a potion; while the immortal words "Yellow Wizard is about to die" could strike terror into even the hardest gamer's heart.

Ultimately though, for all its clever tricks and borrowed gameplay it was the sheer joy of exploring the unknown that continued to send gamers into *Gauntlet*'s dark depths, and with later stages featuring randomly chosen stages there was always a huge desire to see what lay behind that next exit.

A huge success in the arcade, *Gauntlet* went on to share a similar notoriety on a variety of home systems and was







» [Arcade] If you want to receive your bonus you need to exit the level before the timer runs out.









A GAUNTLET SURVIVAL GUIDE

Despite the many levels you have to traverse in Gauntlet, there isn't exactly a massive variety of monsters to face on your travels. Granted, the vast majority of them come in three different strengths, but seeing as this is denoted on screen by slightly different colour hues this doesn't really count. Still, here's a brief rundown on the denizens (and items) you can encounter in the original arcade game



Ghost
Springing from the bones of dead adventurers, these monsters are relentless and will mercilessly hunt you down at every opportunity.



Grunt
Effectively *Gauntlet*'s answer to *D&D*'s orcs, grunts are brutish human-like creatures that excel at hand-to-hand combat.



Lobber
This tiny creature is relatively weedy when going up against somebody head-to-head, so he attacks from distance by lobbing rocks at you.



Demon
This toothy fellow prefers to attack at long range by spitting fireballs. He's not too shabby at close combat either, so take him out quickly.



Sorcerer
A pain in the arse to fight due to his invisibility. Your best bet is to take the fight to the bearded one and beat him once you're right on top of him.



Thief
Despite looking like a copper, this fellow will nab goodies off you the first chance he gets. Get them back by killing him before he can escape.



Death
This guy is immune to your attacks and can only be defeated by potions. If your health is high though you can hit him for lots of points.



Bottles
Grants you 100 health points, but poison versions exist, too. You can also shoot them, so use shots carefully whenever they appear.



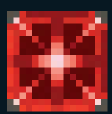
Amulet
This handy item grants you limited invisibility. Needless to say it becomes invaluable when adventuring with a large group.



Indestructible Food
Food is everywhere and will restore 100 health points upon consumption. These plates are indestructible, so aren't hurt by stray shots.



Blue Potion
While you can shoot them for a lesser effect, it's best to pick up potions. Be careful as blue potions can be destroyed if you shoot them.



Transporter
These handy devices effectively act as teleporters and move you to the next nearest one available. Handy for when you need to make a quick exit.



Special Potion
Available in six different types, downing these grants you anything from better fighter power, to faster shots. Only lasts for a limited time.



Key
You'll need keys to open *Gauntlet*'s many doors. Worry not as you can open all doors on a single level by waiting around for about 30 seconds.



Treasure
These chests are all over *Gauntlet*'s stages and will award you with 100 points. Be sure to share them with your friends though.



Orange Potion
These act the same as usual potions. The biggest benefit here is that they're impervious to harm, so won't get destroyed by misplaced shots.

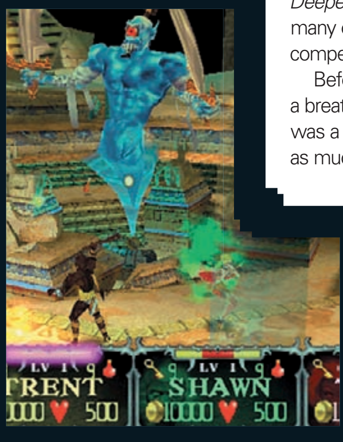


Generator
These come in three types and spew out monsters until they're destroyed. Deal with these as soon as possible or you'll be in trouble.



Exit
You won't reach the next level without these. If you're too lazy to fight, losing around 200 health will turn all the walls to exits anyway.





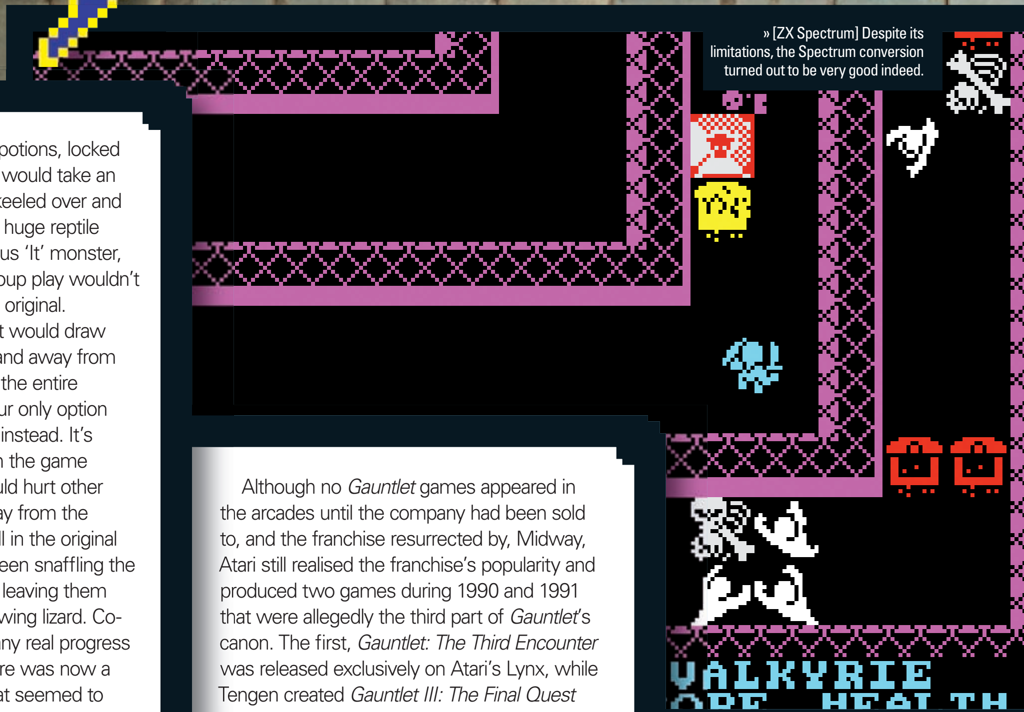
ported to many, many machines. The 8-bit computers all received highly polished conversions (see **Retro Gamer** issue 23 for an in-depth look at how these conversions were created), while more powerful machines like the Atari ST added a large amount of the digitised speech for even greater authenticity. Even new systems like Xbox Live Arcade and the Game Boy Advance received their own ports, with Digital Eclipse's excellent Live Arcade version boasting online play, which added greatly to its otherwise limited appeal (the GBA version on the other hand is so poor we won't waste any more ti…). Home computer owners even went so far as to receive a brand new expansion pack entitled *Gauntlet: The Deeper Dungeons* in 1987, which featured 512 new levels, many of which had been designed by gamers as part of a competition run by US Gold earlier that same year.

Before we move onto Atari's excellent sequel, let's take a breather and look back at Tengen's NES effort, which was a totally different beast to its arcade parent, but just as much fun to play through. While the cynical draining of cash/sorry… energy was still evident in the NES exclusive, there was now an actual story attached to all the hacking and slashing, with Thor and the rest of the crew having to retrieve a sacred orb that was safely tucked away on the game's 100th level. While all the original enemies returned, notable additions to the core gameplay included the ability to carry special potion effects to new levels and a very handy password system (handy as it took an age to battle through). The fact that only two players can play at one time is a disappointment and it can be a real chore to collect all the pieces of the password that are needed to actually obtain the coveted artefact, but it proved that *Gauntlet* did have potential away from the arcades and it arguably started the evolution that the series would eventually take.

So with *Gauntlet* becoming massively popular around the world it wasn't long before the coffers at Atari needed refilling, so Ed Logg was once again called on to work his Midas touch. Released a year after *Gauntlet*, *Gauntlet II* employed the same basic gameplay as its predecessor but added several gameplay mechanics to the mix. The biggest addition to the sequel was that everyone could now choose the same character, meaning it was now possible for a blue, green, red and yellow warrior to take on the awaiting enemy hordes. Other cool additions included the ability to ricochet shots off walls – handy when you were low on health and wanted to



RUNNING THE GAUNTLET



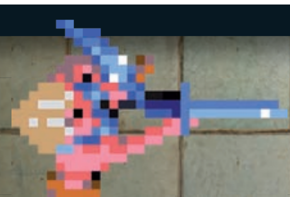
» [ZX Spectrum] Despite its limitations, the Spectrum conversion turned out to be very good indeed.

attack from a distance – invisible walls, new potions, locked chests, acid puddles and a huge dragon that would take an insane amount of shots before it eventually keeled over and died. Not content with giving dungeoneers a huge reptile to battle, Logg also included the now infamous 'It' monster, whose addition immediately ensured that group play wouldn't be quite as harmonious as it had been in the original.

Indeed, get touched by this creature and it would draw every single on-screen enemy towards you and away from the other players. Considering that taking on the entire horde by yourself was effectively suicide, your only option was to try to tag a friend and make them 'it' instead. It's a great mechanic that appears all too rarely in the game and, along with the addition of shots that could hurt other players, proved Logg was keen to move away from the 'teamwork' approach that had worked so well in the original game. After all, there's a big difference between snaffling the odd treasure chest ahead of your mates and leaving them on their own to deal with a colossal, fire-spewing lizard. Co-operative play was still essential for making any real progress in *Gauntlet II*'s dangerous dungeons, but there was now a mischievous bent to the on-screen action that seemed to bring the worst out in players.



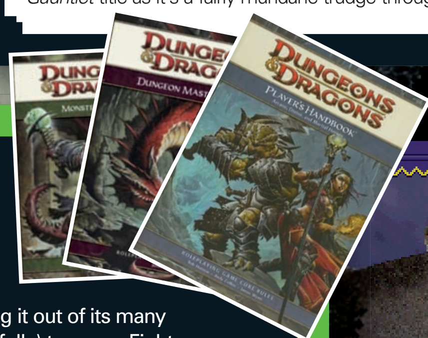
Despite its popularity it would be 13 years before a new *Gauntlet* appeared in arcades and the focus of the franchise instead moved to the living rooms of computer and console owners. While Ed Logg did initially pitch a 3D version of *Gauntlet* for the arcade, Atari wasn't having any of it, so Logg's initial idea morphed into 1987's excellent but underrated *Xybots* instead.



Although no *Gauntlet* games appeared in the arcades until the company had been sold to, and the franchise resurrected by, Midway, Atari still realised the franchise's popularity and produced two games during 1990 and 1991 that were allegedly the third part of *Gauntlet*'s canon. The first, *Gauntlet: The Third Encounter* was released exclusively on Atari's Lynx, while Tengen created *Gauntlet III: The Final Quest* a year later for the Amiga, Atari ST, Amstrad, Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum.

Originally created by Epyx, *Gauntlet: The Third Encounter* actually started off life as a Lynx game called *Time Chests And Treasure Quests* and featured a motley assortment of characters that ranged from a pirate (complete with obligatory parrot on shoulder that he would fire towards enemies) to a nerd that looked suspiciously like *Chip's Challenge*'s unlikely hero. One quick name change later and Atari has a new *Gauntlet* game to sell on its powerful new handheld. Sadly, no doubt due to it originally being a clone, this Lynx effort doesn't really deserve its *Gauntlet* title as it's a fairly mundane trudge through 40 tiny





GAUNTLET'S TRUE INSPIRATION

While *Dandy* is *Gauntlet*'s videogame predecessor, *Dandy*'s origins can be directly linked to TSR's *Dungeons & Dragons*, which is now enjoying both its 4th Edition and its third decade. Although Palevich never played the game, he pored over the rulebooks while creating *Dandy* and would regularly watch friends play it. *Dandy* is even a phonetic pronunciation of the term 'D and D', so it should come as no surprise to learn that the final version of *Dandy* shares many similarities with the classic RPG.

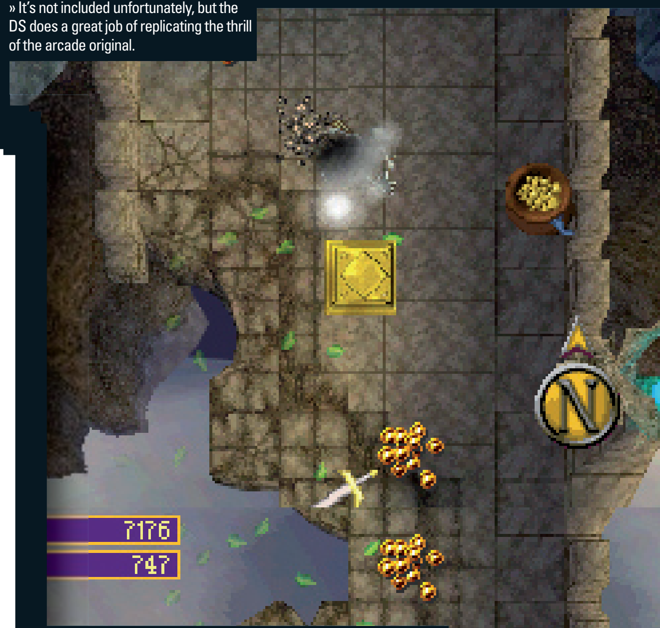
Dungeons & Dragons traditionally has four players adventuring into an often-unknown dungeon and clearing it out of its many monsters and (hopefully) treasure. Fighters, elves and wizards are all available as *Dungeons & Dragons* characters, while a fifth player, known as the Dungeon Master, would oversee rules in the game.

Coincidentally, *Dandy* was originally envisioned as a five-player game with four players playing from one computer while the fifth player would take on the role of the Dungeon Master and operate the on-screen action from a linked-up computer, although time constraints meant this never came to pass.



» [NDS] *Gauntlet* DS's bestiary automatically updates whenever you meet new enemies.





» It's not included unfortunately, but the DS does a great job of replicating the thrill of the arcade original.

levels in search of a mysterious Star Gem that's crash-landed on your home world. There are a few nice touches sprinkled throughout the adventure – a small portion of the screen is dedicated to a first-person view of an approaching creature/ item – and the visuals are rather humorous and easy to make out on the Lynx's small screen, but it's just far too easy to present any real challenge.

It's fortunate then that *Gauntlet III: The Final Quest* (yeah, right) turned out to be a far better game, receiving mainly positive reviews in the gaming press at its 1991 release. Now set in the mythical land of Capra, like *The Third Encounter* it also includes a larger playing roster, with the four heroes of the original arcade games being joined by a lizard man, an ice man, a rock man and a Merman. Again a story takes centre stage, but unlike previous games in the series, you're now required to complete specific tasks in order to progress. While many of the missions are relatively simple to complete, it at least breaks up the monotony that could often claim players of the original titles (particularly if they didn't have anyone else to adventure with). Still, for all its new gameplay additions it was *Gauntlet III*'s new graphical facelift that had most gamers talking. Presented in a brand new isometric viewpoint, *The Final Quest* looks truly stunning in places, with fantastically detailed sprites, gorgeous looking locations and some brilliant (if repetitive) music by Tim Follin, the impeccably detailed visuals do create one slight drawback. Due to the intricacy of the on-screen visuals, you're never overwhelmed by monsters like you were in *Gauntlet I* and *II*, meaning that you never feel in any immediate danger (something Logg's games were able to achieve so well).

Eager to cash in on the success of Sega's Mega Drive, Tengen's next effort, *Gauntlet IV* (or just *Gauntlet* as it was known in Japan) was a system exclusive that not only faithfully emulated the original arcade game, thanks to its use of the Mega Drive's multitap, but also included a variety of new game modes. Created by M2 and published by Tengen, *Gauntlet IV* is actually a highly polished addition to the series that is well worth hunting down if you're a fan of the original arcade hits. While the Battle mode (players fight against each other) and Record mode (a long-winded score attack offering) are mostly throw away, it's the excellent Quest mode that you'll be spending most of your time on.

Completing levels (you now ascend one of four elemental towers instead of moving deeper into the ground) awards



Sadly, depsite being very good, the C64 version of *Gauntlet III* never received an official release.

you with gold and experience points that can be used RPG-style to buy new weapons and other items, while the return of wave after wave of enemies meant that this was to all intents and purposes still the same *Gauntlet* of old. Other new additions to the franchise included extra floor tiles that instead of simply stunning the player could stop them from using magic or weapons, while certain treasure chests would even move away from greedy players. All in all *Gauntlet IV* seemed to have found the perfect balance between the hectic gameplay of old, but with just enough variety to keep more casual gamers hooked.

The magic formulae appeared to have been found, but Atari was not content to rest on its laurels. With 3D graphics now commonplace within the arcades, Atari looked at resurrecting its popular franchise with the power of polygons. The end result: *Gauntlet Legends*.

While it kept the same core group of adventurers that had appeared in the original *Gauntlet*, *Legends*' big draw was that each character could now be levelled up (up to level 99) and that it was possible to greatly expand their four attributes – Strength, Speed, Armour and Magic – as you acquired more experience. New items like shields and breath attacks greatly increased a hero's power, while huge, powerful bosses now await the adventurers at the end of each level. Interestingly, it also featured a password system so you could save your characters and continue the challenge at a later date. You

» [Dreamcast] Just a small selection of *Legends*' many new characters. The jester is a particular favourite of ours.



RUNNING THE GAUNTLET



GAUNTLET'S LEGACY

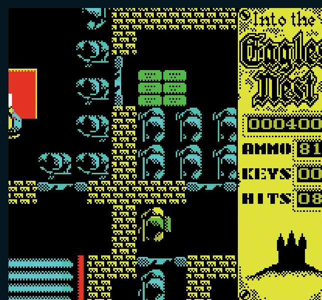
Okay, so technically this should be Dandy's legacy, but hey, it's a feature about Gauntlet. Anyway, here are just a few of the titles that bear something of a resemblance to Ed Logg's classic dungeon crawler…



Alien Syndrome

Publisher: Sega
Year Released: 1986
Featured System: Arcade

Sega was one of the first developers to jump on the *Gauntlet* bandwagon with this rather decent Xenomorph effort. Ghosts and grunts have been replaced by kidney beans (that's what they look like), you're required to rescue a set amount of humans before you move on to the next stage, different weapons are available and there's the odd giant boss to fight. Oh, and did we mention this is all done against a timer? The addition of one-hit kills is rather annoying, but this is still a decent outing.



Into The Eagle's Nest

Publisher:
Year Released: 1987
Featured System: ZX Spectrum

Instead of fighting your way through hordes of mythical monsters, Pandora's *Into The Eagle's Nest* requires you to enter a German castle (the Eagle's Nest of the title) and mow down wave upon wave of German soldiers. Yes it's about as politically correct as a Chris Rock concert, but it's a surprisingly polished effort and an interesting take on the genre – even if it doesn't offer any multiplayer mode whatsoever. It's a bit of a looker as well, so check it out if you're after something a little different.

Garrison

Publisher: Rainbow Arts
Year Released: 1987
Featured System: Amiga 500

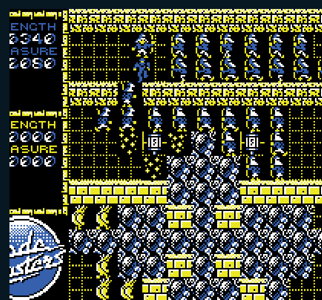
We were going to feature the Bitmap Brothers' *The Chaos Engine*, but Rainbow Arts' *Garrison* is so obviously a rip-off of *Gauntlet* that we had to include it. Of course, followers of the German publisher will realise that it's no stranger to controversy (*The Great Giana Sisters*, *Katakis*). Still, considering that *Gauntlet* was never available on the Amiga you can see from the accompanying screenshot why Rainbow Arts was so eager to get Digital Dreams' game out. Thank goodness it was actually a decent game.



Ninja Massacre

Publisher: Codemasters
Year Released: 1989
Featured System: Amstrad CPC

Replace four heroic warriors with a lone ninja, mix in some annoyingly jerky scrolling and add an utterly ear-jarring theme tune and the end result is *Ninja Massacre*, an awful clone by Codemasters that still gives us nightmares. While the idea is sound, the execution is dreadfully poor and many of the stages are a real chore to complete. Granted, its low price point would have won it a few fans, but by its release you could get hold of the repackaged original anyway. Rubbish.





Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters

Publisher: Atari
Year Released: 1989
Featured System: Arcade

Utilising an isometric viewpoint, *Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters* takes the hectic gameplay of *Gauntlet* but adds a healthy amount of humour to the on-screen action. Many of the 8-bit versions suffered from needlessly fiddly controls, so stick with the arcade original so you can appreciate Atari's effort as it was originally intended. Like many *Gauntlet* variations it only manages to accommodate two players at any one time, but it still manages to capture the spirit of Logg's classic coin-op.



Alien Breed: Tower Assault

Publisher: Team 17
Year Released: 1994
Featured System: PC DOS

The *Alien Breed* series did very well for Team 17 thanks to its hectic gameplay, slick visuals and brooding soundtrack. While several iterations exist, the brilliant *Tower Assault* is easily the best due to its great level design, beautifully polished visuals and surprisingly varied gameplay (you're given a fair few tasks to complete as play progresses). Difficulty has also been pitched perfectly compared to previous games, meaning that you've no excuse to not experience this gem of a game.

Diablo II

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Year Released: 2000
Featured System: PC

Unlike the original *Diablo*, Blizzard's sequel was created for online play. The end result was a superb update that now, some eight years after its original release is still heavily played and acts as a useful stepping-stone for those wanting to experience MMORPGs. Set across four acts and consisting of a huge amount of randomly generated maps, *Diablo II* stays constantly fresh, and along with *Baldur's Gate* greatly improves on the high standards set by *Gauntlet Dark Legacy*.

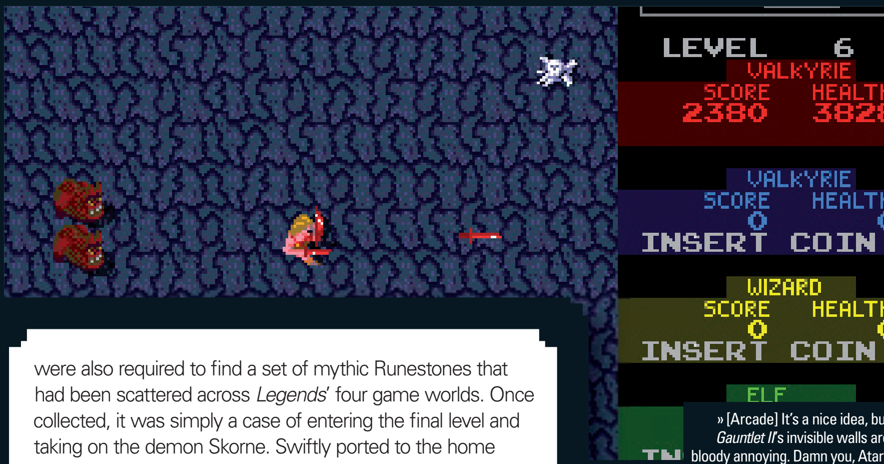


Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II

Publisher: Interplay
Year Released:
Featured System: PS2

Realising that its hit RPG *Baldur's Gate* wouldn't translate well to the home consoles of the time, Black Isle Studios cut down on the role-playing and greatly enhanced the on-screen action. The end result is a solid *Gauntlet* clone that borrows heavily from *Dark Legacy*, but adds *Dungeons & Dragons* rules, weapons and magic to the equation. While both games are great fun to play through (especially with another player) we prefer the sequel, simply because it boasts far better quests.





were also required to find a set of mythic Runestones that had been scattered across *Legends*' four game worlds. Once collected, it was simply a case of entering the final level and taking on the demon Skorne. Swiftly ported to the home consoles of the time – N64, PlayStation and Dreamcast – *Gauntlet Legends* received mainly mixed reviews (strange as we were big fans of the N64 port) with many criticising its ugly visuals and limited gameplay.

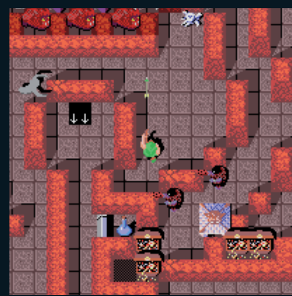
Unperturbed by its lacklustre reception Atari Games (now operating under the name Midway Games West) quickly set to work on a new expansion/sequel that would hopefully fix many of the issues gamers had had with *Legends*. It didn't disappoint either, as for us, *Dark Legacy* was a massive evolvement that improved on *Legends* in a variety of ways (although once again we appear to be the only people who really appeared to love it).

Upping both the choice of characters to eight (with many more secret ones to be unlocked) and the amount of levels to battle through, *Dark Legacy* retains the muddy, murky visuals of its predecessor (both games, even after a few short years have not aged gracefully), but adds plenty of useful game mechanics that greatly spice up the gameplay. The most obvious is that each character now has both a slow and fast attack, which can be combined to create a variety of combos. Other handy combat additions include the ability to strafe, charge opponents and block (which greatly reduced the amount of damage you took) and a greatly enhanced turbo gauge (which first made its appearance in *Legends*).

Another nice touch is that you no longer have to use items as soon as you find them and can instead turn them off for use at a later time, which greatly improved the otherwise limited strategy to be found within the game. Not so good, however, was the limited availability of gold, as it was now used to buy items at *Dark Legacy*'s store. Granted, puzzles were extremely limited whenever they appeared, but the action itself was fast and furious and, most importantly, retained the spirit of the original arcade game. It still wasn't enough for critics, however, with many stating that it was far too simple for its own good and that it offered little extra over the original game (which begs the question did they even play *Legends*, or the original *Gauntlet* for that matter).

With the series now held in apathy, it would be another five years before *Gauntlet* would appear again, although this time it bypassed the arcades completely and headed straight to the Xbox and PS2. Spearheaded by the legendary John Romero and ex-Black Isle Studios staffer Josh Sawyer, who had worked on both *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance I* and *II* (which blended the action and RPG genres far better than previous *Gauntlet* games had managed), great things were expected from *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows*, even after both men left the project. Sadly, it wasn't to be, despite some decent ideas (see our review in issue 22) and the addition of online play (a first for the series), *Seven Sorrows* just wasn't able to capture the magic of previous games in the series. Indeed, compared to the excellent *Dark Legacy*, online play aside, it could actually be seen as a huge step back for the series and left many gamers with a sour taste in their mouths.

And so, finally, we come to the incoming DS release, and luckily our tale has a happy conclusion as Backbone Entertainment (previously Digital Eclipse) has done the franchise proud with a solid update that retains the pioneering spirit of the arcade original. While it would have been nice to see arcade ports of the first two games, this is nevertheless a great update that will really please fans of Atari's long-running series. The DS's dual screens work surprisingly well, making it extremely easy to pinpoint generators and avoid more powerful enemies. Combat abilities like *Dark Legacy*'s strafing make a welcome return, while there are a variety of different items to collect and use throughout the huge quest. The assorted bestiary you fight against has been greatly updated; you've access to some limited, but extremely devastating attacks that grow in strength as you become more powerful and there are plenty of huge bosses to put into the ground. Best of all though is the excellent Wi-Fi mode that allows you to experience all the competitive gameplay of old without ever having to leave the comfort of your own home. It might lack the solid RPG elements that began to appear in the likes of *Legends* and *Dark Legacy*, but after 23 long years the *Gauntlet* franchise is once again on fine form. Who knows where it will be in another two decades…



» [Arcade] It's a nice idea, but *Gauntlet II*'s invisible walls are bloody annoying. Damn you, Atari.



» [Arcade] *Gauntlet II*'s dragon might not look that impressive but you certainly don't want to mess with him.









Something Old Something New



Game Title: Gauntlet
System: Nintendo DS
Interviewee: Bill Schmidt, designer, Backbone Entertainment

RETRO GAMER LOOKS BACK AT SOME OF THE CLASSIC FRANCHISES THAT ARE BEING REVIVED FOR NEXT-GENERATION SYSTEMS. THIS MONTH WE CHECK OUT BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT'S BRAND NEW UPDATE OF GAUNTLET

Retro Gamer: Why choose the DS to make a new *Gauntlet* game?
Bill Schmidt: Backbone Entertainment started off by remaking classic games, and many of our employees have a huge love for them. So when presented with a chance to redo one of the greatest classic games ever, we jumped at the opportunity. A lot of the team had just finished up with *MechAssault: Phantom War* for the DS, and after taking the design possibilities into account, we felt that the DS was the best platform for the game.

RG: How involved has Midway been with the title?
BS: Midway had given us an overview of what they would like to see in the game at its conception, but gave us a lot of freedom to do what we wanted within those boundaries. Throughout the build process we would receive notes about what they liked and didn't like. The team would get together and discuss the viability of the new suggestions and implement them; or, in some cases, make a case for why we should keep the feature list as is at that stage.

RG: Did you take your inspiration from any of the previous *Gauntlet* titles? If so, which ones?
BS: We drew most of our inspiration from the original *Gauntlet* arcade game. We felt that, while they were very fun games, the past few *Gauntlet* titles had deviated from the core aspects of the arcade version – so in response, we wanted to revive that original gameplay. Being that we were developing for a handheld system, we had technical hardware limitations to keep in consideration, so we also worked on pushing those limits as much as possible.

RG: What were some of the challenges you faced during development?
BS: One of the biggest issues we ran into during early focus testing was aiming and manoeuvrability due to our camera system at the time. We wanted the player to have as much control over their situation as possible, and not have them feel cheated because they couldn't rotate correctly or easily enough to kill the enemies around them. We solved this by adding precision camera and strafing options to the game. With precision camera you can fully rotate around your player, which makes it much easier to aim at your targets – greatly improving your chances of surviving. Using the default camera is still an option for players, but the addition of the precision camera gives players the freedom to determine their own style and difficulty level as they play the game.

RG: What do you think the DS version of the game brings to the franchise?
BS: I think *Gauntlet* DS really captures the spirit of the original arcade version, fast-paced gameplay and all. We've also introduced a basic levelling system, which grants you 'Power Moves' when you reach certain levels that allow you to dish out some serious damage when needed. We also added a fame model to the game that is tied into the amount of gold you are holding. More gold, more fame, more damage! Most importantly, we added a competitive multiplayer layer to the franchise, opening up the four main characters to a whole new type of gameplay.

RG: A lot of work has gone into the multiplayer aspect of *Gauntlet* on the DS, was this one of your main objectives?
BS: Yes, it sure was. Playing the original *Gauntlet* with friends was so much fun, and we really wanted to capture that as much as possible in our DS version. Having local and Wi-Fi support was a huge component of this. We worked on this game for quite a while, and every one of our multiplayer sessions with the team was a blast. I remember constant shouting across cubicles because Sara Guinness (the game's producer) was stealing my food, or I would stand in front of her while she was getting pounded on by a slew of enemies so she couldn't move, letting her die so I could steal all her gold. My personal favourite is standing on a door switch, and stepping off of it just as someone is crossing through the doorway, gibbing them as the door closes. General evilness and trickery is all in a day's work for a hardy adventurer.

RG: Which *Gauntlet* is your favourite and why?
BS: Definitely the original arcade version by far. The sheer franticness you feel from seeing all those enemies charging at you or waiting on the other side of a door blew me away. All other arcade games at that time were single-player based. *Gauntlet* was one of the first games that allowed you to play with three other people at the same time. That was just amazing.

RG: Did you feel much pressure making the game?
BS: We sure did. *Gauntlet* is a huge title with a lot of expectations from gamers, and as we all know, gamers are the biggest critics out there. It's a tough thing to try to push the boundaries of a classic without breaking them.

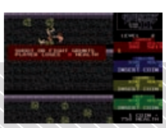
RG: How tricky is it creating a game that appeals to two separate generations of gamers?
BS: The good thing about *Gauntlet* is that pretty much everyone loves the original game. So, with our decision to embrace the beloved gameplay of the arcade version, instead of separating the generations, we've brought them together in one loving, monster-slaughtering, puzzle-solving, boss-crushing beatdown.

RG: Why does the franchise remain so popular?
BS: Because of its simple yet elegant design. Choose a character, go into the dungeon and kick some ass. Couple that with multiplayer and you've got a recipe for awesome.

RG: How would you like your version of *Gauntlet* to be remembered?
BS: To me, it would be the multiplayer experience. Playing games are about having fun with friends. Playing Death Match and Co-op with the team has created some of my most memorable experiences in my eight years at this company. There is nothing better while multiplayer testing during the wee hours of the night, than to put the pick on your producer as she crosses a spike trap, leaving her to die while watching me take all of her gold.

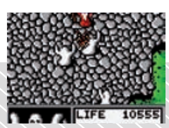
Gauntlet Timeline

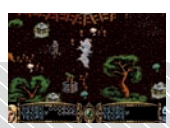

GAUNTLET
Year Released: 1985
Featured Version: Arcade

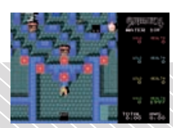

GAUNTLET II
Year Released: 1986
Featured Version: Arcade


GAUNTLET: THE DEEPER DUNGEONS
Year Released: 1987
Featured version: C64


GAUNTLET
Year Released: 1987
Featured Version: NES


GAUNTLET: THE THIRD ENCOUNTER
Year Released: 1990
Featured Version: Lynx


GAUNTLET III: THE FINAL QUEST
Year Released: 1991
Featured Version: Amiga

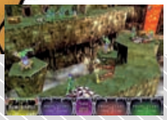

GAUNTLET IV
Year Released: 1993
Featured Version: Mega Drive



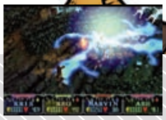
» The insubstantial wraith (left) shares many similarities with *Gauntlet*'s ghosts. Our advice is to stay well away from them and finish them at a distance.

» While this artwork for the warrior features him in his familiar red garb, it's possible to choose from a variety of different colours in the actual game.

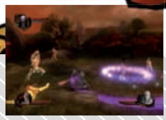
» Many of the featured monsters don't appear in the arcade original. Above is a Henchman Ward, while the big brute to the right is a Magma Lobber.



GAUNTLET LEGENDS
Year Released: 2000
Featured Version: Dreamcast



GAUNTLET DARK LEGACY
Year Released: 2001
Featured Version: PlayStation 2



GAUNTLET: SEVEN SORROWS
Year Released: 2005
Featured Version: Xbox



GAUNTLET
Year Released: 2008
Featured Version: Nintendo DS



» Any enemies caught in that purple ring of power are automatically augmented. Avoid their powerful attacks and kill the source as quickly as possible.

THE MAKING OF…

BENEATH A STEEL SKY

A CYBERPUNK ADVENTURE WITH A DOWNTRODDEN HERO. A STORY OF HOPE AMID OPPRESSION. HOW REVOLUTION STUDIOS TOOK POINT-AND-CLICKS IN A FRESH DIRECTION. AND, AS DAVID CROOKES DISCOVERS, WHY THERE IS STILL A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THIS INCREDIBLY POPULAR GAME…

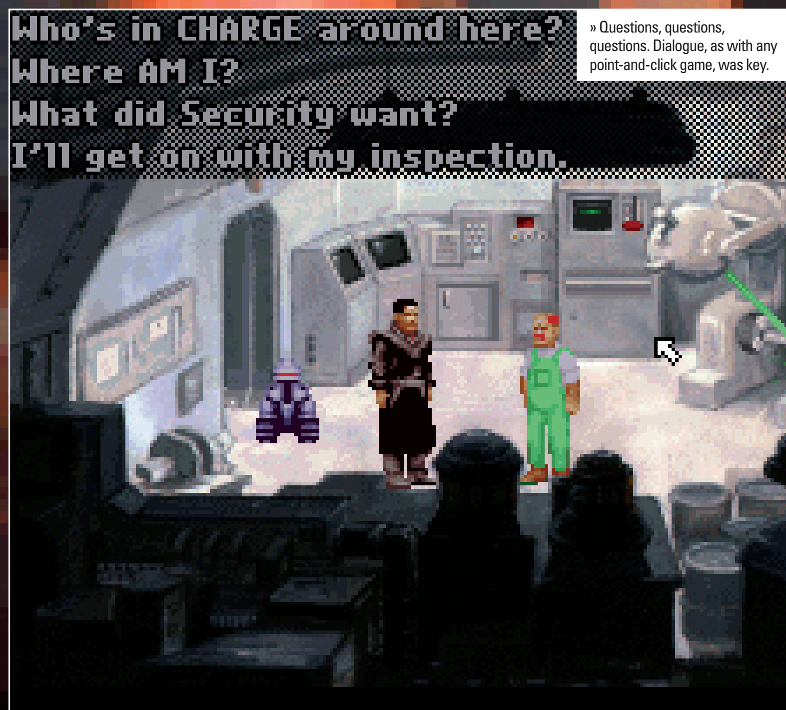


» Joey was never too impressed at the bodies in which Foster placed his personality circuit board.





» Dramatic scenes as Reich is split in two by a laser – adding to the game's intrigue.



» Questions, questions, questions. Dialogue, as with any point-and-click game, was key.

B*lade Runner* blew us away," says Charles Cecil, recalling the 1982 classic movie. Ten years on and the director's cut was released – just as Revolution Studios was looking at producing its second point-and-click adventure game. "We found ourselves being drawn down a similar, sci-fi route with our second game, *Beneath A Steel Sky,*" continues Charles. "There was something about that dystopian view of the world which struck a chord."

Revolution's first title, *Lure Of The Temptress* – a £30,000, two-year project – was attracting critical acclaim in the gaming press and Charles was keen to build on that success. "I was a great fan of the first *Mad Max* film," Charles explains. "There was this open wilderness where anything could happen. Although not deliberate, making *Beneath A Steel Sky* in the way we did was not so surprising really when you consider that we had been so inspired by those two movies."

With this desire to move away from the dungeon setting of *Lure Of The Temptress* and instead propel forward by delving into sci-fi, he called a meeting at his base in Hull and started to throw some ideas around. "Politics lacks passion today, but back then it seemed really important," Charles says. "The miner's strike was not long over, we were in the middle of a pretty severe recession and it was a period of worry. So the ideas that evolved were ultimately about hope within a setting of a dystopian, largely oppressive future, the kind which so fascinated me in *Blade Runner.*"

Influenced by *Mad Max,* it was decided to set *Beneath A Steel Sky* in Australia in what the game referred to as 'the Gap', rather than the Outback. The cities are highly stratified – the poor live in the polluted upper reaches, surrounded by factories, and the rich live in the unpolluted bottom. "We thought about Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* where you had the rich people living in the skies and the poor on the ground and decided that, since this was Australia, we should reverse that. In *Beneath A Steel Sky,* you get the opposite of that age-old New York thing of 'the higher you get' and instead you try to work your way down.

"But you know," Charles adds. "It would be very pompous to claim that I set out to create a game that was a reflection of the political climate, or that it was to be some sort of commentary on the way we were living and where it would lead us to – it really was a product of its time and, quite possibly, if I were writing the equivalent game today, it might be about hypocrisy – whether political or corporate, particularly in regard to Iraq. I think it would be much darker and there would be a feeling of hopelessness. Maybe I am just older."

The story came first, with the beginning and end of the plot fixed at the start of the narrative process. Charles and scriptwriter Dave Cummins wanted to ensure the story was in place before anything else was created. "We had to ensure that the story would drive the game forward and allow us to include innovative puzzles," says Charles. "As with any good point-and-click adventure game, the puzzles have to work within the context of the story."

IN THE KNOW

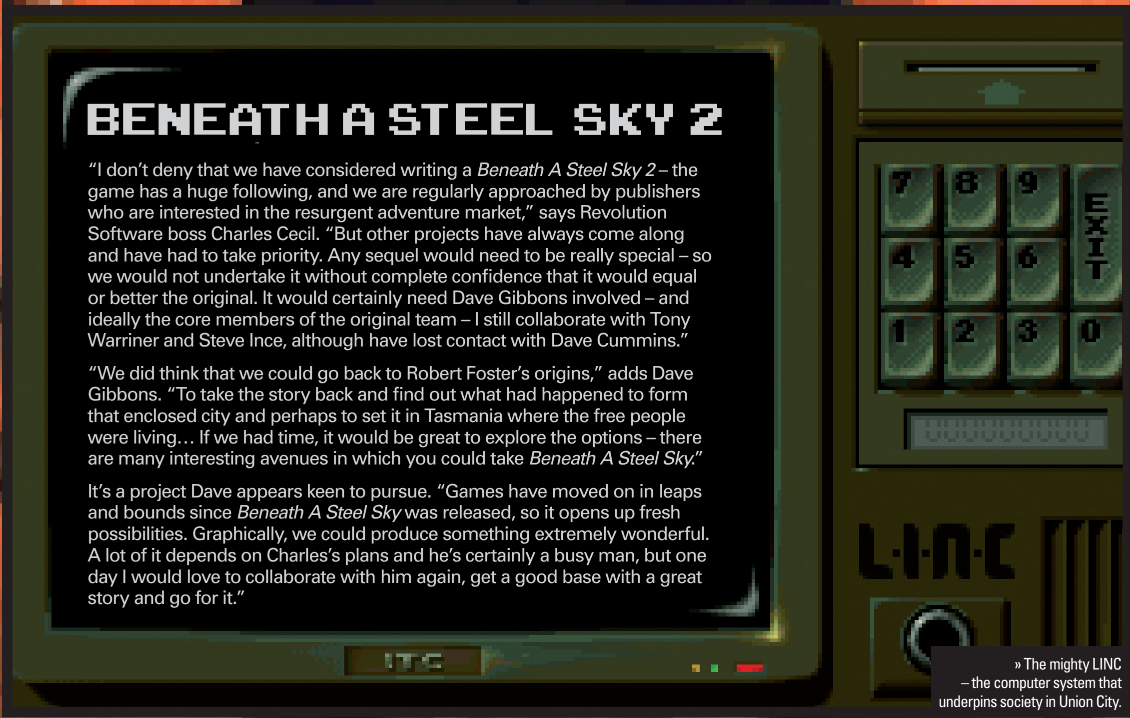


- **» PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE
- **» DEVELOPER:** REVOLUTION SOFTWARE
- **» RELEASED:** 1994
- **» CONVERSION PLATFORMS:** DOS, AMIGA, AMIGA CD32
- **» GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- **» EXPECT TO PAY:** AROUND £3 TO £5

BENEATH A STEEL SKY



» A visual way of showing Foster delving deep into the LINC system.



BENEATH A STEEL SKY 2

"I don't deny that we have considered writing a *Beneath A Steel Sky 2* – the game has a huge following, and we are regularly approached by publishers who are interested in the resurgent adventure market," says Revolution Software boss Charles Cecil. "But other projects have always come along and have had to take priority. Any sequel would need to be really special – so we would not undertake it without complete confidence that it would equal or better the original. It would certainly need Dave Gibbons involved – and ideally the core members of the original team – I still collaborate with Tony Warriner and Steve Ince, although have lost contact with Dave Cummins."

"We did think that we could go back to Robert Foster's origins," adds Dave Gibbons. "To take the story back and find out what had happened to form that enclosed city and perhaps to set it in Tasmania where the free people were living… If we had time, it would be great to explore the options – there are many interesting avenues in which you could take *Beneath A Steel Sky*."

It's a project Dave appears keen to pursue. "Games have moved on in leaps and bounds since *Beneath A Steel Sky* was released, so it opens up fresh possibilities. Graphically, we could produce something extremely wonderful. A lot of it depends on Charles's plans and he's certainly a busy man, but one day I would love to collaborate with him again, get a good base with a great story and go for it."

» The mighty LINC – the computer system that underpins society in Union City.





» Gilbert Lamb starts to throw his immense weight around.



With such a heavy feel to the plot, it was decided humour was needed to lighten up proceedings. The idea was to allow the human spirit to shine through the dark, grim world around which the main characters Robert Foster and his robot friend Joey would wander.

The plot was certainly involved. Robert finds himself the sole survivor of a plane crash, which has plummeted into an Australia damaged by pollution. Adopted and raised by indigenous Australians, Robert develops a love of technology and builds his talking robot pal, Joey. His family also teach him how to survive amid the bleak surroundings of Earth and they give him the surname Foster – in part because they have adopted him, but also because they found a can of Foster's Lager close to him at the crash site.

But, as Foster becomes an adult, his tribal family are killed by an army sent from Union City by a powerful computer called LINC (Logical Inter-Neural Connection). Foster is kidnapped but the helicopter transporting him to the all-powerful central metropolis crashes inside the city's dome. As security guards scour the land for him, Foster and Joey set out to discover the reason for the kidnapping.

"Yes, Union City was Sydney," confesses Charles, confirming a long-held suspicion. "We included names of key London underground stations such as King's Cross to try to throw people off the scent."

The backstory was contained in a comic drawn by Dave Gibbons – the talented comic-book artist who is best known for his work on *Watchmen*. He would travel from his home in St Albans, near London, to Hull to meet with the Revolution team ("it wasn't the easiest place to get to," laughs Dave) and it was decided that, rather than include a stuffy, wordy manual, a comic would really do justice to the game.

"It worked well," Dave adds. "It was Charles's idea and it was a clever way to get people into the story. Best of all, it enabled us to really give the characters depth and more of a recognisability factor. In the comic, I could draw with sharp clean lines and gamers could look at it and see just how we wanted those characters to look. So you'd see the pixels on screen and think, 'yeah, there's that cool guy in his trendy long coat that I've just seen in the comic'."

Charles had been a fan of the *Watchmen* comics and had got in touch with Dave. "He could see I would create visually consistent worlds that he felt would translate well into his adventure games," Dave recalls.

"I remember Revolution had the story already worked out but they wanted me to have some input into it and help create a style. I was involved in the character design and I remember the process well. I would draw the characters by hand and then convert them into pixelated form on my son's Amiga." Dave also drew all of the backgrounds. "I did the outlines and an artist, Les Pace, coloured them in," he says. "There were several hundred of them to do."

The partnership between Dave and Revolution worked well. "What I always enjoyed about comics was that you



» Time to swing over the city in a rare piece of action.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, ATARI ST, PC
YEAR: 1992

BROKEN SWORD
SYSTEMS: PC, PLAYSTATION, GBA, NINTENDO DS (TBA)
YEAR: 1996

had these people who would sit in their bedrooms and draw superheroes," explains Dave. "And then there was Charles and his crew who had grown up doing something similar – producing games in their bedrooms – and so I saw these parallels. It was like putting these creative people with similar backgrounds together to produce something that was amazing."

Blade Runner was a stark influence on Dave too, and while he can't recall why it was decided Robert Foster would wear a long trench coat, he remembers the movie playing a major part. "If nothing else, it gave *Beneath A Steel Sky* a bit of a *Blade Runner* feel," he says. "It just seemed appropriate. The dark overcoat made him look tough and you could imagine it allowing him to blend into the shadows, the effect he would wish for." And Joey? "The robot was different," he replies. "It was just a good idea to have a sidekick and the futuristic setting worked well for that."

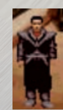
Dave's comic book did hit some problems, however. Lager producer Foster's wasn't happy that the artist had drawn the alcoholic drink without permission. "They courteously asked us to remove it from the comic," recalls Charles. "We were happy to take it out and that was the end of it. But when you look at the situation we have today where advertisers are keen to have their brands associated with videogames and find it beneficial, it just shows how different the thinking was 15 years ago."

Beneath A Steel Sky was created in sections, which allowed the programmers, artists and scriptwriter to ensure each part was perfected before moving on. Joey was seen as a crucial element to the game and the 'buddy' concept has been included in all of Revolution's games to date. "It's important to have a second character," says Charles. "And we thought Joey, a term for a young kangaroo, would offer something novel in this brave new world. Joey was also Foster's friend from before the kidnap so it was a good way to convey the background on Robert. Having a companion allows the writers to hide exposition. You can use the dialogue between them to divulge the necessary background information that, if it was purely presented through cut-scenes, for instance, would slow the game down. And it's through the exchanges that you can create humour and drama."

But there was still a little matter of how to tie the whole thing up – a subtle motivation for why Foster was kidnapped was just hanging in the air and it was crucial to pin it down. "Initially we were stumped about how to tie everything up and give an emotional resonance for the kidnapping. It kept us thinking for absolutely ages…" says Charles. The team racked their brains, held meetings, scribbled on bits of paper, lay awake thinking of the single element that would crack it. And – spoiler alert, so fast forward the next paragraph if you don't want to know – the team struck gold.

"We were stumped," admits Charles. "Then someone said, out of the blue: 'It's his dad.' And we were like, yes, of course. And everything fell into place. That was a pivotal moment and it's rare that you have that epiphany in a story. The link with LINC – it just all made perfect sense."

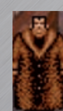
KEY PLAYERS



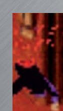
Robert Foster – As the sole survivor of a helicopter crash which claimed the life of his mother, he was raised by indigenous Australians. A skilled engineer and intelligent, he appears quite cold and seldom exerts the fear or excitement you would expect of a man in his situation.



Joey – Despite being a robot, Foster's sidekick is bristling with personality. Sarcastic, insulting and prone to a few sexual innuendoes, Joey is picky about the robotic shells in which Foster implants his circuit board 'brain' and he provides much of *Beneath A Steel Sky*'s infamous humour. One of the best gaming 'buddies'.



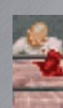
Gilbert Lamb – Lamb is the pipe-making factory supervisor who adores his cat, but is otherwise a boorish bully. Forever walking around (there's one part where you need to hand him something and you can end up chasing him from screen to screen), Foster gets a chance to "D-LINC" him at one stage.



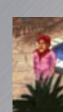
Officer Stephen Reich – You don't see Reich for too long, although you do end up playing for most of the game with his ID card in your pocket. Reich manages to survive Foster's second helicopter crash and attempts to recapture our hero. He finally catches up with him – but quickly ends up being killed.



Anita – Every oppressive state needs a rebel and Anita is that girl, happy to take a risk in order to help Foster and assist in destroying LINC. As a shrewd hacker, she is able to host a virus on the network. She plays a crucial role in the game.



Dr Burke – Will you offer Foster's testicles to one of gaming's most corrupt plastic surgeons? In between dipping his hand in the body of a hapless patient, this drug-addicted doc is nevertheless highly skilled and the best man in Union City to go to for a very useful Schriemann port!

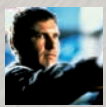


Miss Danielle Piermont – Piermont is a lovely old dear who potters around with her little dog. But despite appearing dippy on the exterior, she is powerful and has good connections – perfect for advancing further in Union City. If only Foster didn't have to torture her dog…

THE MAKING OF... BENEATH A STEEL SKY

INSPIRATIONS

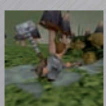
Influenced by:



Blade Runner – Revolution Studios adored *Blade Runner.* So Charles Cecil drew on the fictional world of Ridley Scott's masterpiece… with a fresh look. "The theme was in danger of becoming clichéd," says Charles of *Blade Runner*'s legacy, "so we decided that we would have to turn the genre on its head."

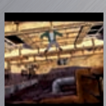


Comic books – With British comic-book artist Dave Gibbons on board for the visuals, *Beneath A Steel Sky* deliberately drew on the graphic-novel style (*Broken Sword*'s graphics were inspired by cartoons). And to show just how influential comics were to *BASS,* Dave – whose most famous work is the *Watchmen* comics – drew the accompanying manual.

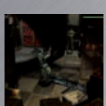


King's Quest – Charles played Sierra titles in the late Eighties – and didn't like them, feeling they were ropey. But he loved the idea of adventure games (he created text-based adventures when he was at Manchester University). *Lure Of The Temptress* was his first major point-and-click, but he wanted to do more, hence *Beneath A Steel Sky.*

Went on to influence:

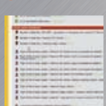


Broken Sword: The Shadow Of The Templars – Buoyed by the success of *Beneath A Steel Sky,* Revolution went on to create the masterpiece that became *Broken Sword,* following the same 'Foster/Joey' buddy technique to great effect by introducing George and Nico. Both *BASS* and *Broken Sword* included a character called Danielle Piermont, too.



In Cold Blood: Another Revolution game that was deeply political, *In Cold Blood* highlighted a bleak future here on Earth. Envisioning a war between America and China, the game saw special agent John Cord betrayed but, worse, the balance of power on Earth on the verge of destabilisation.

A new breed of adventure gamers



By allowing both *Lure Of The Temptress* and *Beneath A Steel Sky* into the public domain, giving gamers the rights to copy and distribute the game for free, Revolution has helped to introduce a new set of fans to point-and-click adventures. By using ScummVM, it's possible to play the game on a wide variety of platforms.



» Incurring some wrath… Foster has to tinker with lots of machinery and whether or not he gets away with it is down to some cunning.




» No time to sleep but sometimes you find some wonderful stuff beneath pillows…



As with *Lure Of The Temptress, Beneath A Steel Sky* used the Virtual Theatre game engine that lead programmer and co-founder of Revolution, Tony Warriner, had written. Allowing events to be scripted and letting animated sprites be easily moved against Dave's drawn backgrounds, it made the development of Revolution's point-and-click games easier. It was the same method of production used at LucasArts, which based many of its adventures on Ron Gilbert's SCUMM engine. Where the Virtual Theatre engine excelled was in its artificial intelligence. The non-player characters wandered about Union City and interacted with the surroundings. Sometimes players ended up getting stuck between a non-player character and the scenery, which was annoying for the gamer but on the whole it was massively innovative. "The supervisor Gilbert Lamb wanders around from one area to another," says Charles. "It makes the world seem more natural."

What annoyed some players more, though, was the level of difficulty. This was, after all, pre-internet popularity and online help guides for *Beneath A Steel Sky* didn't exist. "It was indeed a product of the Nineties," laughs Charles. "But my view then was that we needed to appeal to a wide audience and to do that you needed hard puzzles otherwise the hardcore gamer would complain that it was too easy. Magazines carried cheats and things like that and they would help players through some of the stumbling blocks so it wasn't all bad."

Were there any puzzles that he would have removed in hindsight? "Having not replayed the game for some years, I really couldn't say," Charles answers. "But I think if I look back then perhaps I would remove some of the dialogue because it can tend to get in the way."

Charles was in charge throughout the game and, even though he was working with other creative types such as Dave, he ensured his vision was being carried through. "I love working with the very best creative people in different disciplines," he says. "But everyone must agree in advance that while they are experts in their fields, the gameplay must come first. And the person who has the vision – in this case me – has to direct these people and ensure they conform to that vision."

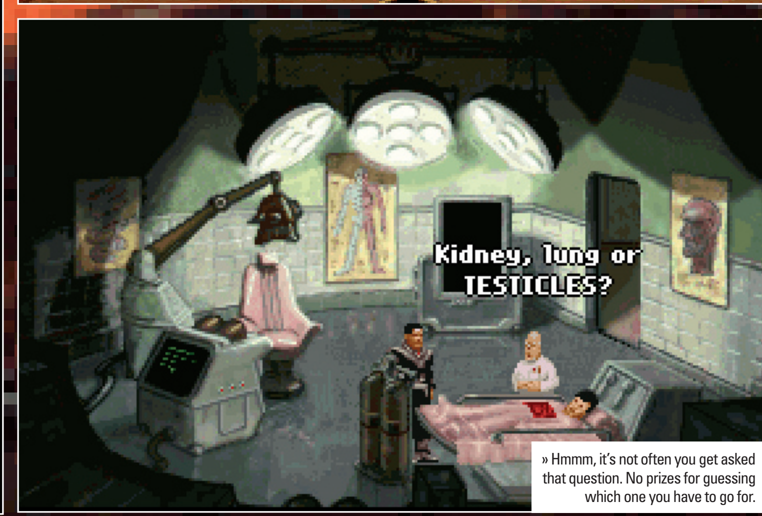
But there were rumours that the development of the game was troublesome. The fact the game was huge – four times larger than *Lure Of The Temptress* – meant the game took a long time to produce with many hours of overtime poured into the title. According to Tony Warriner it also meant the game had to be simplified and altered from the original design. Charles doesn't remember that having to happen.

"Someone has gone on Wikipedia and written a slightly negative entry – presumably one of the original team," Charles explains. "As a developer, I would say, yes, it was tough but it's never easy. Sometimes it gets unpleasant and it grinds you down but that's the nature of creating any ambitious game. Yet when it's all over and you look at the game, there's a great sense of pride and everyone who worked on it felt that."

He continues: "*Lure Of The Temptress* was simple. It was a nice idea and, in some ways, I was disappointed we never took



» Robert Foster is staring straight at the Houses of Parliament…



» Hmmm, it's not often you get asked that question. No prizes for guessing which one you have to go for.

VIRTUAL REALITY

Four games used the Virtual Theatre engine: Lure Of The Temptress (1992), Beneath A Steel Sky (1994), Broken Sword: The Shadow Of The Templars (1996) and Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror (1997)



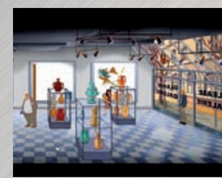
Lure Of The Temptress

As the first game to use the Virtual Theatre engine, *Lure Of The Temptress* showed how much of a rival it could be to LucasArts' SCUMM and Sierra's Creative Interpreter. The artificial intelligence of the Virtual Theatre engine gave characters in the game greater free will – a departure from the usual static non-player characters. *Lure Of The Temptress* may not have had the same level of humour as *Monkey Island 2* (released the same year), but this British production in which you must rid the world of the evil temptress Selena and rescue an innocent girl called Goewin had fantastic character interaction and logical puzzles.



Broken Sword: The Shadow Of The Templars

With the introduction of George Stobbart and Nicole Collard came a brand new point-and-click adventure game series – a series that won Revolution Studios a whole legion of new fans. The historical setting of the game and references to the Knights Templar in a plot thick with intrigue was brought to life by the cartoon-style, graphic attention to detail. It had an explosive start – quite literally – and it was a scene setter, which worked brilliantly in drawing the player into the game. *Broken Sword*'s wonderful voice acting, the driving narrative and the thoughtful puzzles kept the game's many fans playing.



Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror

The sheer success, critically as well as in terms of sales, of the first *Broken Sword* meant the Virtual Theatre engine was dusted off for a fourth time for *Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror.* The game continues six months after the end of the debut and begins with Nico strapped to a chair in a burning house. The action spans the globe from Paris – where there is tension with André Lobineau – Marseille, Quaramonte, and the jungle to the Caribbean, Zombie Island, London and the Pyramids. This time the action involves an evil Aztec god and a conspiracy revolving around the forthcoming solar eclipse.

it to the next level. What we had with that game was a large number of characters which would roam at random, but the level of ambition we had for *Beneath A Steel Sky* meant that we had to compromise in some respect so the roaming of non-player characters wasn't 100 per cent free. But with *Beneath A Steel Sky* we were aiming extremely high and when you read the reviews at the time, it makes me proud to see how well received it was."

Charles recalls taking the game around the magazines at the time. Danielle Woodyatt was the PR manager for Virgin and she would take Charles and Dave to meet journalists. "Danielle was great," recalls Charles. "She was relaxed and people liked her. I remember one time when we visited a magazine and started showing the journos the game. Suddenly they began pulling out copies of the *Watchmen* comics and Dave spent a while signing the lot. It was very positive and they were dying to see what he had created with the game."

The critical acclaim for *Beneath A Steel Sky* is still apparent today. There are many fans who would love to see a sequel ("we have considered this," says Charles – see 'Beneath A Steel Sky 2' boxout on page 34). And, thanks to Revolution deciding to release *Beneath A Steel Sky* as freeware, the title continues to attract new gamers. Far from regretting giving the game away, Charles says it was one of the best things that he ever did. "Some people congratulate me and say it was a very shrewd market exercise," he admits. "They reckon that by giving *Beneath A Steel Sky* and *Lure Of The Temptress* away we were attempting to build the brands and drive people to play our later products.

"But it wasn't that well planned – if only we were that bright," he laughs. "It just got to the stage – with the advancement of Windows – when the original DOS games wouldn't work any more on new machines. Then the guys who created the ScummVM interpreter started talking to Tony Warriner to see if we could provide them with the assets to allow them to get the game running again – Tony was keen to do it, and we decided that it would be a good idea to make those titles freely available. We felt there was nothing to lose. I have no regrets and it has meant that so many more people have been able to play the games."

But would Charles change anything about *Beneath A Steel Sky* if he had to rejig it? "What – you mean would I create a director's cut like Ridley Scott did with *Blade Runner*?" he laughs. "Well, I think you could always make changes. There would always be things you could alter but changes are not always for the better. You know, when I look at competitor adventures like *Monkey Island* and the other LucasArts games, which I found so brilliant, I'm proud that *Beneath A Steel Sky* is considered to rank among them. If I'm being entirely honest, we were unsure how well the ideas would gel – how well the game would come together. So when it released and was so well received, it was a great relief and hugely thrilling – I am very proud that the game still attracts such passion, 15 years after its original release."



In the chair with…

HIDEO KOJIMA



FROM SNATCHER TO METAL GEAR SOLID, KOJIMA'S FERTILE IMAGINATION IS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND SOME OF THE MOST LAYERED AND FLESHED-OUT VIDEOGAME UNIVERSES EVER SEEN. HAVING RECENTLY FINISHED TYING UP THE LOOSE ENDS OF HIS MAGNUM OPUS, RETRO GAMER TOOK TIME TO SPEAK WITH VISIONARY GAME DIRECTOR HIDEO KOJIMA ABOUT HIS LIFE IN THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY

It's obvious to anyone that Taito clearly had the literary works of HG Wells in mind when it set about creating *Space Invaders*, and it's equally clear that a few studio heads at Universal Studios smelt an odious whiff of stop-motion in *Donkey Kong*. Heck, two issues back Yu Suzuki admitted to us that *OutRun* was based loosely on the *Cannonball Run* film.

The point that we're trying to make is that cinema has always played a major part in the directions and themes that videogames choose to base their gameplay around. And Hideo Kojima's *Metal Gear* franchise clarifies brilliantly the evolution that this relationship has taken in the last 20 years. *Metal Gear* was created with restrictions in mind. Shirking combat for covertness, it relied heavily on story, characters and cinematic influences to drive its action and drama, and it did so with fantastic results. With those technical 'restrictions' losing their potency to time and new technology, videogames have found themselves in a position where they can finally match their filmic peers both visually and sonically – a notion that has culminated brilliantly in the apparent final episode of Kojima's popular *Metal Gear* franchise.

In this issue's In The Chair With…, **Retro Gamer** speaks to the legendary game director Hideo Kojima about his prolific career in the videogame industry, and tries to eke out some classified intel about what's next for the revered game director and the forthcoming *Metal Gear* movie.

When did you first show interest an in videogames?
Well, I first had an interest in filming… but couldn't be involved. I was facing frustrations at that time. But then came the Famicom (NES), and I fell in love with *Super Mario Bros*. Also, *Portopia Murder Case* was one of my favourite games, too. I really respected these creators, and enjoyed playing these games. But at the same time, I felt that 'videogames' were a new media, a media with potential. I thought that 'this industry was it' and decided to join the company I am in today.

It's said that you joined Konami with the intention of working in their arcade division. How did you feel when this didn't happen?
Yes. At that time, the leading platform in videogames was coin-ops. You could use so many more colours and the most sophisticated graphics at that time. They were followed by the Famicom and then the MSX, in order of technology. To my disappointment, I was stationed in the MSX team. I wanted to create things from scratch from the PCBs, and had a dream that I could design the control system and the body of the machine. With the MSX, none of this was possible.

You studied economics in college and originally had ambitions to be a film director. Why did you make the leap to videogames and how did your parents feel about this huge career change?
As I said, I felt that games were a new media, and saw potential in that area. If my father was alive back then, I'm sure he would have been concerned about my intention to join a games company. All of my friends and teachers said that I was crazy for not going to work for a bank or some other 'proper' industry job at that time. My mother was the only person that understood and supported my decision to go into the games industry.

Tell us about your early days at Konami, is it true that you once felt like leaving because many of your ideas were ignored or overlooked? What gave you the resolve to carry on?
I was helping out on the basic plot ideas when I first joined the company. I was like a trainee back then. It was fun, but really tough. No one taught me what to do and I had no experience, and no one to ask either. So I was struggling every day, and ended up tweaking a bit of an idea – and that project was *Lost World*. After six months, since our project seemed that it was going nowhere, the company decided to drop it. So yes, I did feel like leaving when the whole project got canned. But at the same time, I felt embarrassed to leave after all my friends advised me not to get into the games industry. I also felt that before leaving, I needed to finish at least one project.

After the disappointment of *Lost World* it must have felt very gratifying when the

IN BRIEF



Hideo Kojima was born in Tokyo in 1963. At the age of three, he moved to Kobe with his parents. Kojima was an only child and his parents both worked, so often he would return home from school to an empty house. This solitude at a young age would spark Kojima's fascination with TV and film, and an initial interest in pursuing a career in the movie industry. However, it was his love for games that spurred Kojima to take a job working for Konami's MSX division. It was here he began brainstorming ideas for his first game, *Lost World*, but after six months Konami dropped the project, leaving a disheartened Kojima to re-evaluate his future in the industry. Kojima stayed at Konami, and began working on *Metal Gear*, a stealth-action game for the MSX based loosely on the infiltration themes seen in classic war films. *Metal Gear* proved to be a huge success for Konami, particularly in the US when it was ported across to the NES. Since then Kojima has gone on to work and lead numerous R&D departments inside Konami, and has been responsible for writing some of the world's most filmic and detailed game narratives. His most successful creation to date has been the *Metal Gear* franchise. His 1998 PSone game, *Metal Gear Solid*, became the most successful game ever released for the machine, and its follow-up, *Sons Of Liberty* on the PS2, would become one of the most highly anticipated releases in videogame history. Kojima is now the head of his own development team Kojima Productions, which was set up in 2005 to relieve Kojima of management duties and to allow the director to focus his talents more on the creative process of making games.



"ALL OF MY FRIENDS AND TEACHERS SAID THAT I WAS CRAZY FOR NOT GOING TO WORK FOR A BANK OR SOME OTHER 'PROPER' INDUSTRY JOB AT THAT TIME"

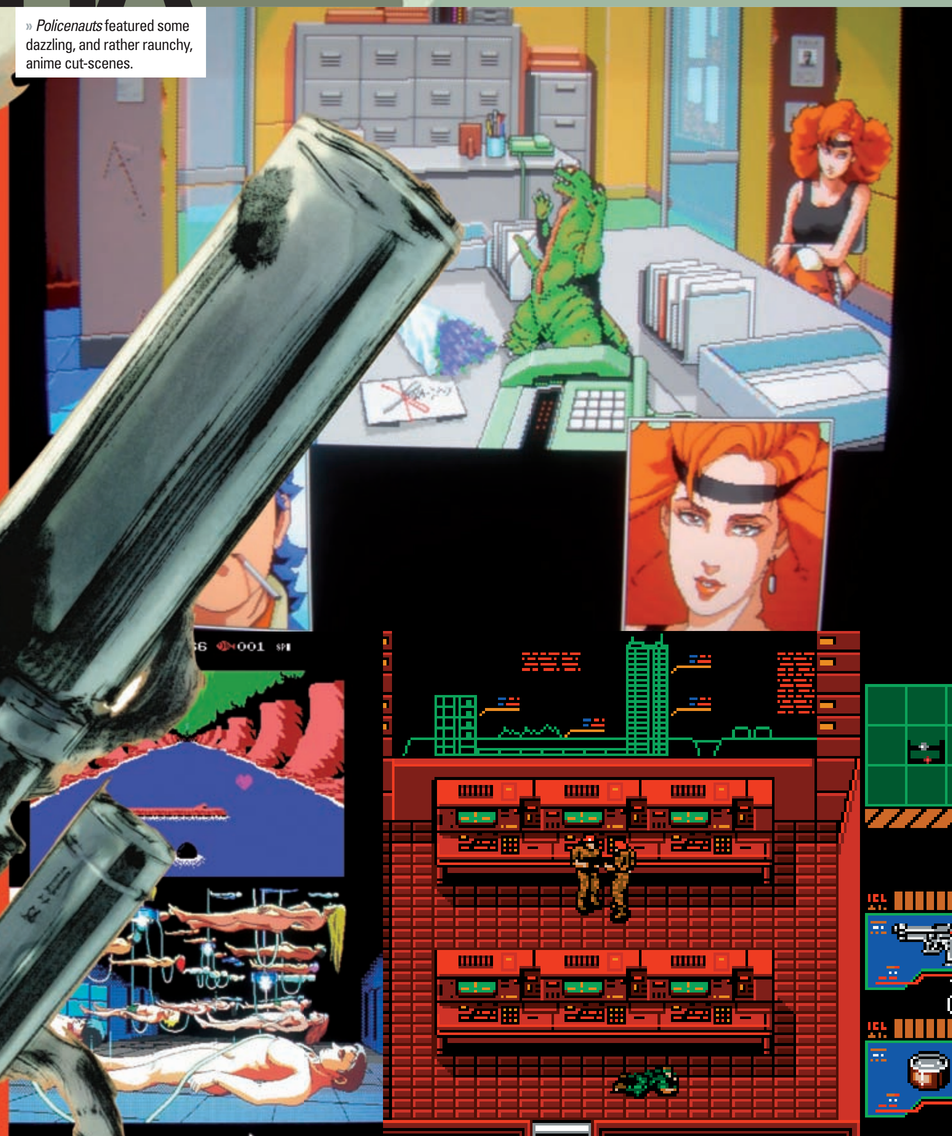
KOJIMA ON PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO HIM CHOOSING TO WORK IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY

» Looking space-age and sophisticated, this is how Atari advertised its latest smash-hit game

In the chair with...

HIDEO KOJIMA





» *Policenauts* featured some dazzling, and rather raunchy, anime cut-scenes.

MSX version of *Metal Gear* then became a huge success for you.

Actually, I had a really great mentor in the company back then. He found out that I failed in my first project, so he invited me out for dinner one night to cheer me up. He was a great guy. In fact, he was one of the people that helped convince the company to do *Metal Gear*.

What was it like trying to cram so many different ideas into such limited technology? Were there any tricks you employed in order to get the most out of the MSX2?

In my division there was also the coin-op and Famicom teams working on those platforms. Being in the lowest technology team – the MSX team – meant I always had to compete in order to get noticed. Imagine that you are making two different kinds of movies in one division. One is making a Hollywood blockbuster movie with all the 5.1 sound and all, and the other team is creating a silent B&W picture. I was on this B&W movie team. I was always thinking about ideas that wouldn't rely on technology, but ideas that would compete with the Famicom and the coin-op teams. A perfect example is Big Core in *Gradius*. In the Famicom version, you can display the boss across the screen. But in the MSX version we had to make it much smaller. The VRAM object technology idea was born like this, too. You know, moving the background to give the impression the ship was flying in space. The 'idea thinking' habit I think I owe to the division I was in. Also, working in this division forced me to understand everything – sound, programming, compression – because when you have an idea, you have to pinpoint how this can be managed and give ideas on the technology aspect, too.





» The *Boktai* series, which Kojima produced, is certainly worth seeking out if you're a Kojima fan.



» Super violent, super gory; *Snatcher*'s snaking narrative would strike a chord with many sci-fi fans.

In what ways has the videogame industry changed since you first started? Do you still have to deal with the same sort of problems you were tackling in the late-Eighties and early-Nineties?
Basically, I don't think the videogame industry has changed all that much… especially in Japan. Games are still regarded as 'just games', and their creators are still considered 'business men' even after 20 years. Look at the authors of comics; they're referred to as 'sensei' (teacher) – with respect. Game designers are not referred to in that way, even today.

There was definitely a change when Sony came into the industry. R&D turned into 'creators'. Interviewing 'creators' started, and events and parties in the industry became a lot more popular.

Your love of movies is very evident in your games, particularly the *Metal Gear* series, can you ever imagine yourself stepping behind the camera at a later point in your career. Or do you feel that the flexibility of videogames will always give you more freedom with the visions you want to create?
I would love to direct a film in the near future. But don't get me wrong. I want to direct something that was always planned to be a movie. For me, directing a game and directing a movie is totally different. I strongly believe that games are games, and movies are movies. They are different things.

You're one of the few game designers who's universally recognised within the industry. How does this attention make you feel, and does it create pressure when you're working on new titles?
I think that nothing about me has changed. I do feel a little bit more responsibility though; I can't just run around and do whatever I



FEATURED GAMES



POLICENAUTS

Released in 1994, and reputedly taking five years to make, *Policenauts* – a portmanteau of police officer and astronaut – was a science fiction film noir, a detective story with designs on the 'mature' gamer. As was the norm back then, videogames that focused on adult themes were generally developed for the PC market, and *Policenauts* was originally released on the PC-98 and 3DO, and then later on the PSone and the Sega Saturn. Sadly, the game was never localised, which means in order to really get a handle on Hideo Kojima's unique vision, a fluency in Japanese is necessary. However, some dedicated chaps at Junker HQ have been working on transcribing the game for the last five years. And we don't envy them either because it's truly a mammoth undertaking. Depending on which version of the game you play, *Policenauts* comes with a weighty in-game encyclopedia that fleshes out the culture and the characteristics of its world.



SNATCHER

Snatcher can be seen as the spiritual precursor to *Policenauts*. The games are set in two different and very distinct worlds inhabited by very different people. Also, *Snatcher* feels less like a detective story and more like a first-person action/adventure game. Its gameplay uses point-and-click style adventuring permeated with occasional shooting sections, and its story touches on the Illuminati and borrows heavily from the films *Blade Runner* and *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*. The story centres on mysterious beings know as Snatchers, who steal the bodies of humans and use them as a host to blend discreetly into society. You play the role of Gillian Seed, and work for a special unit of rangers known as JUNKER who are assigned to draw out and eliminate the Snatchers at any cost.



PENGUIN ADVENTURE

The follow-up to *Antarctic Adventure* saw Kojima taking on the role of assistant director. *Penguin Adventure* is often regarded as one of the finest action games for the MSX, and it's easy to see why. It looks gorgeous, plays brilliantly and comes packed with a fantastic soundtrack. While from the outset the game seems to pander to kids, under the colourful exterior and playful gameplay is a surprisingly challenging game. Also, it somehow manages to cram itself with over 20 varied enemies and obstacles, and just as many quirky items and power-ups. *Penguin Adventure* is also one of the earliest games – alongside *Bubble Bobble*, which was released the same year – to have multiple endings. To view them make sure you only pause once during the game.



METAL GEAR

Most will probably be more familiar with the NES version of *Metal Gear*, which was published by Konami's US subsidiary Ultra Games, but ardent fans should really try to track down the localised MSX version of Snake's first espionage caper. Why? Well, Konami butchered the MSX original when it translated *Metal Gear* across to the NES. Most notable changes to the Nintendo conversion included different layouts for the levels, altered bosses – Metal Gear doesn't appear at all – and some exquisite examples of 'English' that come to blemish Kojima's hard work. Konami's NES port was the most ported version of the game (appearing on C64, DOS and GameCube), which is probably why most fans resign themselves to look at it as more of a rearranged version of the original MSX game rather than simply a port that got heavily lost in translation.

HIDEO KOJIMA

FEATURED GAMES CONT.



METAL GEAR 2: SOLID SNAKE

Owing that Kojima was sidelined for the development of *Snake's Revenge*, the first follow-up to *Metal Gear*, plus the fact that Konami made numerous tweaks to the gameplay in a bid to make the game appeal more to Western gamers, *Snake's Revenge* is vehemently lambasted by fans of series. However, *Snake's Revenge* is not without merit, and Kojima himself has even stated to liking the game, believing it stays true to *Metal Gear* ideals. Shortly after the game's release, however, Kojima would get to work on his successor to *Metal Gear* – *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*, released for the MSX2. Alongside *Metal Gear Solid* on the PSone, *Solid Snake* would become one of the most popular games inside the *Metal Gear* canon, introducing many integral and popular characters – Gray Fox, Campbell – who would all go on to become mainstays within subsequent games in the series.



METAL GEAR SOLID

After an eight-year absence, Solid Snake would return to tactical espionage action with aplomb. David Hayter would give a voice to Snake and the power of Sony's first-born would move Snake into a new dimension. *MGS* saw Snake return to the frontlines and face off against a new terrorist troupe of megalomaniac nutcases threatening to strike a nuclear attack on the world. *MGS* would also launch the franchise into the mainstream, and Kojima to stardom. What impresses most about this reboot of the *MGS* franchise is the script (although, from here on in it seems Kojima relies heavily on Deus ex Machina to tie plot elements together in the series), which is filled with intelligent dialogue spoken by non-cheesy voiceovers and loaded with cinematic and emotive cut-scenes.



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

For the *MGS* sequel, Kojima wanted to try to pull the rug from underneath our feet. In this period of Snake's life he's stronger than he's ever been in the series. No longer a rookie inside FOXHOUND, Snake had become the virtual embodiment of infallible doggedness. Understanding this, Kojima wanted to rattle things up and force fans to look at the character in a very different way. So, after a brief prologue mission, Snake saunters into the boots of side character, hidden under the transparent pseudonym Iroquois Pliskin, and we were assigned the swanlike FOXHOUND rookie Raiden. Raiden was an archetypal bishonen (beautiful boy) and his angelic and girly blond locks juxtaposed stupendously against Snake's tousled and careworn appearance.



METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

While it's doubtful that Konami will pull the plug on the *Metal Gear Solid* franchise completely, *Guns Of The Patriots* has been earmarked as the final *Metal Gear* chapter for both Snake and Kojima. This one is certainly for the die-hards, with a plot with more wayward tendrils than *The Hair Bear Bunch* and intrusive cut-scenes matching the length of feature films. Perhaps owing that this is the first time Snake has embraced the wonders of online gaming, through *Metal Gear Online*, and it's also the first game in the series that doesn't force the player to rely wholly on stealth to see it to its conclusion. But a final and fitting chapter it is – innovative, visually stunning, complex and self-indulgent, all the key characteristics that make the series as popular as it is today.







like any more – that kind of responsibility. I also feel that I need to help lead the industry as a creator, too. But at the same time this distracts me from my creativeness when I work on a game. I sometimes stop and think, "Hey, this idea might not be a huge hit." This is a little annoying at times.

Snatcher is one of your most filmic games and has a huge following with fans. Where did the concept come from?

I loved 'adventure games'. I still do, but at that time I really wanted to create an adventure game. I wanted to create an extension to a text adventure. Many people say that *Snatcher* is like *Blade Runner*, but to me it could have been *Terminator* or *Alien*. Another challenge was determining how to put action into an adventure game. I had so much resistance from staff when I first explained this. "An adventure game doesn't have action!" they shouted (laughs).

The game is extremely gory in places, and has an intelligent, adult theme throughout. Did you face many problems over the game's release due to these adult themes?

No, not really. It was planned for adults in the first place. It was for the PC, the PC-88 and went on to MSX2. It was certainly not aimed at kids. When it was ported to PC-Engine, yes, some people moaned about it, but back then ratings were not as strict as today.

There have been many mentions of _Snatcher_ characters in recent _Metal Gear_ games, could you perhaps be testing the waters for a new game?

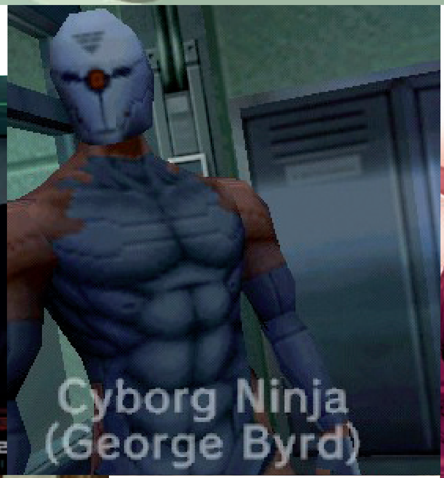
No, nothing like that. Mk II and the guy in the trench coat are from *Snatcher*, but I'm not thinking of testing (laughs). It's just a small 'thank you' to the fans that have long supported me.

Where did the idea for _Policenauts_ originate from?

I have to go back to explain about when I started *Snatcher*. I was in my second year in the company. I had to create *Snatcher*



» Cyborg Ninja, aka Gray Fox, quickly became a favourite among fans of the franchise.





» Kojima's quirky sense of humour is evident in most of his games. Here, Snake uses a PS controller to steer Metal Gear Mark III.



from nothing. No tools, nothing. I drew a storyboard with five or six other people, but the project went nowhere. One day, the company said: 'What are you doing? If you can't create this game then make it in two parts!' The concept sheet was like an encyclopedia, it was that thick. So *Snatcher* was the first part of this project, but after a while, the company changed its mind, telling us we could only make the first part.

Snatcher's reputation was quite good, but our company moved out from the PC business, so I couldn't create the second part. For my next project I started something that I couldn't finish with *Snatcher*, adventure, drama and action combined. That was *Policenauts*. At the time, there was a shift in the company. I was stationed in Kobe with two other guys supervising the R&D group, that division was gone in a year, and then I moved on to the research for development group and I wanted to create a tool for an adventure game… that went nowhere. Finally, R&D No 5 was formed in Kobe. I was stationed there and we were creating the game. The next year Yoji joined the company and *Policenauts* was finally completed. I may as well finish this long story… *Policenauts* was created for many formats, PC-Engine, 3DO, PS, Saturn. During that time, I wanted to create *MGS*. But this wasn't possible in Osaka at that time. Osaka was responsible for creating titles for the Nintendo platform. A little after that, KCEJ was created in Tokyo and I became VP of that company which led me to create *MGS*.

Have you ever considered a sequel and if so, what form would you see it taking?
As I explained, I finished what I wanted to do with *Policenauts*. There was nothing more to add. Also, nowadays, adventure games are not so popular. I must admit, I still like adventure games, and I wish to create another one someday.

How is the *MGS* movie coming along?
Nothing to say at the moment. It is proceeding well, but I can't give you any details at the moment.

***Retro gamer would like to thank Hideo Kojima for giving up his hectic schedule to speak with us, and Steve Merrett for making the interview possible.**

SUPER ROBIN HOOD

HELP ME, ROBIN



- » **PUBLISHER:** CODEMASTERS
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** CPC
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** 3 GOLD PIECES



HISTORY

"Welcome to Robin Hood." That's it, my CPC's first words. And while the weird pitch it chose to project those words, to me, felt like a psychotic malfunctioning super-intelligent android was trying to tap into my brain, I still got a kick out of hearing them when I booted the game up to write this RetroRevival.

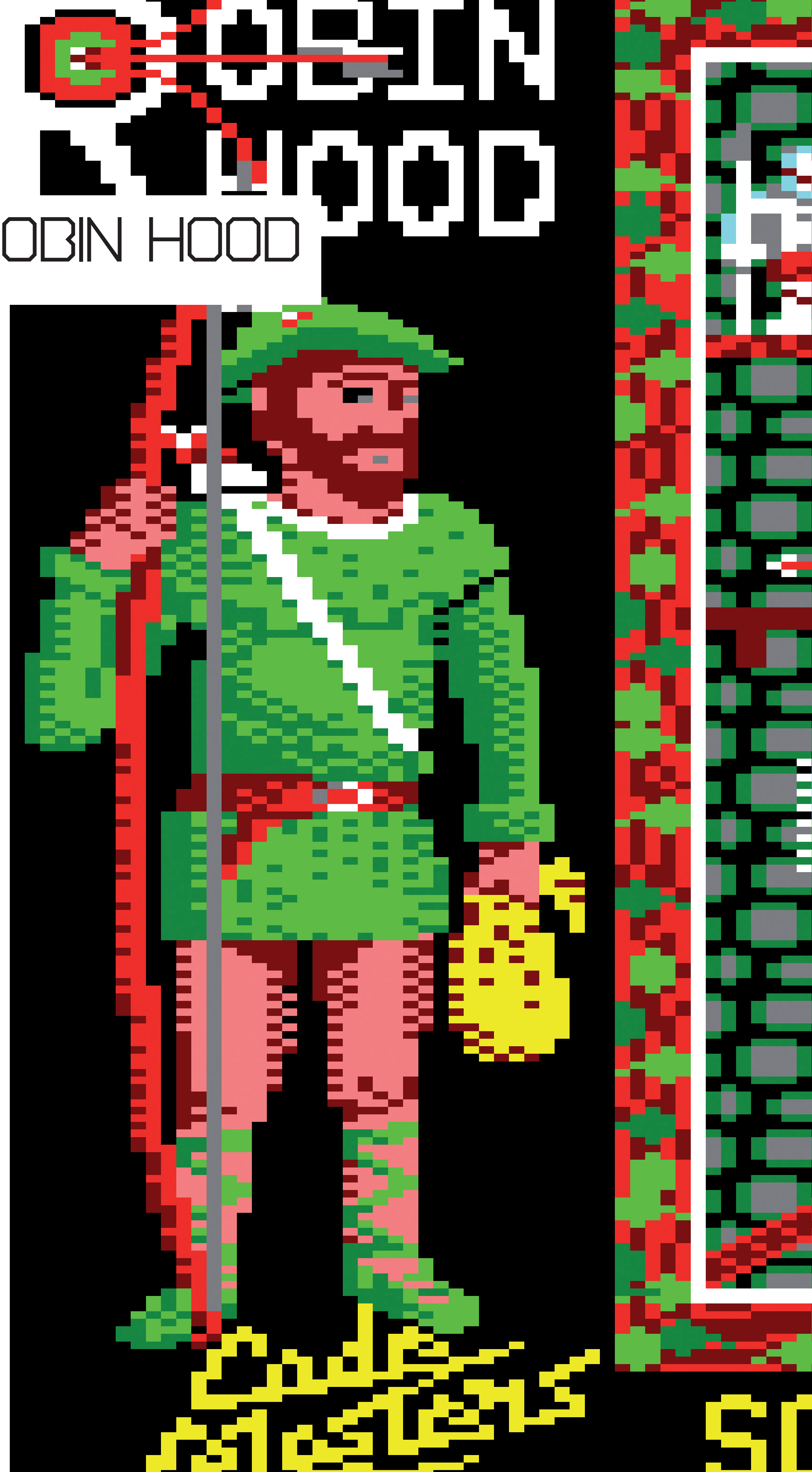
One of the first games from the Oliver Twins, *Super Robin Hood* was a brilliant platformer that sat within the good old healthy rays of the budget-game spectrum – 4 million lightyears from the malignant ones where you'll find *Bionic Granny*.

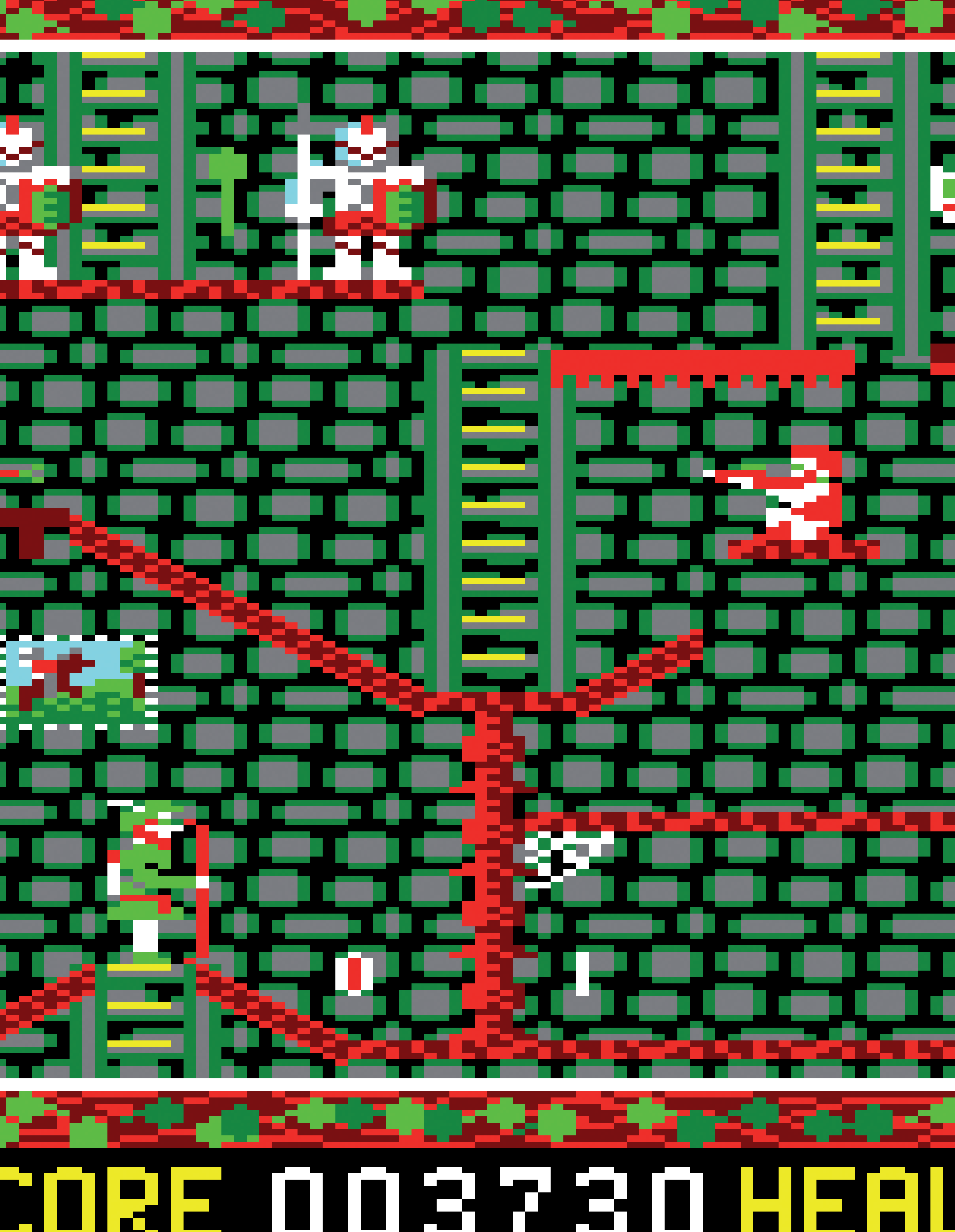
The Sheriff of Nottingham has kidnapped Maid Marian and locked her in his castle, leaving the job of rescuing her to none other than Robin Hood. So, armed with a stupidly long bow, the power of jump, and an infinite number of arrows, you must help our licence-free hero venture to the top of the evil Sheriff's castle and spring her to safety.

The game can best be described as a ledges-and-ladders title, with our forest-dwelling hero required to leap from ledges, valiantly scuttle up ladders and occasionally work a few lifts. The layout of the castle, however, is clearly the work of an idiot. Upon entering the East Tower, finding Marian in the Sheriff's mind-bending maze of interconnecting rooms is a bit like trying to find decent music inside an old-peoples' home.

Making Robin's quest more stressful, however, are rats that bite, rolling fireballs, giant friendly-looking spiders, and an army of arrowsmiths and sword-waving soldiers. But thankfully Robin has been blessed with a favourable health bar, and the careless Sheriff has dropped plenty of painkillers around his stony manor for our Rob to guzzle down.

But despite all I've said about the game so far, the one thing I clearly remember loving about *Super Robin Hood* was the fantastic score by Jon Eldridge and Tim Green, which I occasionally left running in the background while I tidied my bedroom, or alphabeticised my 400-odd Amstrad games collection – a collection that I would later sell to finance a SNES. What a chumpface.




CORE 003730 HEAL

The Ultimate Adventure of Sir Arthur Pendragon

THE SPECTRUM HAD SABREMAN, ULTIMATE'S INTREPID ADVENTURER AND STAR OF FOUR CLASSIC GAMES, WHILE THE COMMODORE 64 HAD ITS OWN ULTIMATE HERO IN THE SLIGHTLY ODD SHAPE OF SIR ARTHUR PENDRAGON. SABREMAN WAS CREATED BY COMPANY FOUNDERS CHRIS AND TIM STAMPER, BUT WHO WAS BEHIND THE PENDRAGON GAMES? FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, MARTYN CARROLL REVEALS THE MEN RESPONSIBLE AND FINDS OUT HOW THEY ENDED UP CREATING GAMES FOR THE UK'S MOST REVERED SOFTWARE HOUSE



» Dave Thomas, the hitherto unknown author of the Sir Arthur Pendragon games.



» The 1962 fantasy film *Jack The Giant Killer* was an obvious influence on *Karnath*. Compare the castle from the film to the game's loading screen.



» Dave's first game was the incredibly tough shooter *Warlok*. "It was basically a rip-off of *Scramble*, which I'd seen in the arcades and loved playing," he says.



» Just how do you get past that Day-Glo vampire blocking the door? The first of *Karnath*'s many devious puzzles.

Trying to uncover any inside information about Ultimate Play The Game is on a par with completing *Sabre Wulf* without losing a life. Basically you've got no hope. Such is the level of secrecy surrounding the developer that we'd swear that former employees signed gagging contracts under the threat of death by blunt spoon. No one is willing to talk, even now, more than 20 years after Ultimate became Rare and began to concentrate on console software. Questions such as what happened to *Mire Mare*, was *Knight Lore* really completed before *Sabre Wulf*, and who authored the later games like *Martianoids* and *Bubbler*, look set to remain unanswered.

The authorship of the six original Ultimate games for the C64 is also a mystery as none of the games carry credits. A breakthrough came in 2001 when a programmer named Manuel Caballero contacted the Ultimate Wurlde website (www.ultimate-wurlde.com) and revealed that he was the author of *Imhotep*. But who was behind *The Staff Of Karnath* and the other adventures starring Sir Arthur Pendragon? Fortunately the guilty parties left behind a small clue. If you managed to complete *Dragonskulle*, the fourth and final game, you'd find the following message: "This concludes the Pendragon adventure series, we hope you have enjoyed playing them, DT and RET 1985." Just who did these initials belong to? They didn't match up to any of the known Ultimate employees at the time.

The mystery was solved by Frank Gasking of Games That Weren't 64 (http://gtw64.retro-net.de) who noticed that the music to *Buggy Boy* on the C64 sounded similar to the *Dragonskulle* theme tune. And *Buggy Boy* was programmed by Dave Thomas with graphics by Robert (Bob) Thomas. The initials matched and it only took a few emails to track Dave down and receive confirmation that he and his brother Bob were indeed behind the Pendragon games. Better still, Dave did not fear death by spoon and was happy to be interviewed – even if he was slightly surprised by our interest.

"To be honest, I had no idea anyone was in the slightest bit interested in knowing that Bob and I were responsible for the Pendragon games," says Dave, when asked why he hadn't come forward before now. "This was 20-odd years ago and is ancient history as far as I'm concerned."

The story actually begins closer to 30 years ago, when Dave was studying computer sciences at college in Cheltenham in the early-Eighties. "It was around this time that the ZX80 was announced and I decided it would be very useful to aid my college studies so my parents bought me one," he remembers. "When it finally arrived I thought the thing was

"WE HAD A LOT OF FUN DOING THE PENDRAGON ADVENTURES AND FOUND THE STAMPERS TO BE GREAT TO WORK FOR. WE HAD A HUGE AMOUNT OF RESPECT FOR THEM AND THEY WERE ALWAYS VERY GENEROUS AND WARM PEOPLE" DAVE THOMAS

so dreadful I sent it back!" The unfortunate ZX80 was soon replaced by a more appealing Acorn Atom that older brother Bob stumped up the cash for. "It was on this system that I learned to code. Although I didn't get around to writing any games on the machine, it was instrumental in giving me a start in the career I've had to this day."

That career was kick-started in 1983 when Dave upgraded to a more advanced 6502 machine, the Atari 400, and created his first game. It was called *Warlok* and while it was a clear rip-off of Konami's *Scramble*, it would bag him a most unexpected windfall. "I discovered that a company called Calisto Software was running a competition to find the best original game and the winner would receive a cheque for £5,000. I decided to enter Warlok and a few weeks later was announced as the winner. I remember travelling to a swanky club in London's Grosvenor Square and receiving the cheque from Dave Lee Travis!"

In addition to a nice fat cheque, Birmingham-based Calisto offered Dave a particularly jammy job, which saw him travelling to America. "Calisto had some kind of tie-in with Adventure International and its founder Scott Adams was looking for someone to convert one of his adventure games to the new Commodore 64. Calisto flew myself and another coder out to Orlando and we stayed with Scott and his family for around a month to complete the project. I honestly can't remember the name of the game we ported! On my return, I was told that the C64 was selling incredibly well in the UK and it would be worth converting my original Atari version of *Warlok* to it. I spent the next few weeks doing the conversion and hence my first C64 title was born."

Dave worked for Calisto for a while but he soon got fed up with the daily commute from his home in Cheltenham to Calisto's offices in Birmingham. "I decided to go back to developing games for myself," he says, and with his C64 skills sufficiently honed, he began to piece together the game that would become *The Staff Of Karnath*. "I'd had an idea in my mind about creating a pseudo-3D adventure game set in a castle which used a fixed perspective as though you were looking into a doll's house. I did some preliminary work on the engine for it and created the main character but my graphical skills at the time didn't extend to building the castle. However, my brother Bob was a trained technical illustrator working for a local company that subcontracted work from the MOD. He'd frequently bring work home and I'd see him working on drawing up the insides of some missile or submarine on his drawing board. So he helped out with creating the castle rooms. We'd both seen an old film called *Jack The Giant Killer* and that influenced a lot of the visuals, especially the castle itself. I was also reading a lot of HP Lovecraft at the time and that had a bearing on the storyline of the game and the title, *The Staff Of Karnath*."

Taking control of Sir Arthur Pendragon (the adventurer's name was borrowed from the Black Prince Pendragon, the evil wizard from *Jack The Giant Killer*), the player had to explore the creepy castle and collect 16 pieces of a magical pentagram while avoiding various energy-sapping nasties. But it wasn't just a case of using quick reflexes to grab the piece before you got zapped, as in most cases you had to solve a tricky puzzle to make the piece appear in the first place. These cerebral elements were drawn from Dave's work for Adventure International. "The AI games were purely text with static images and we wanted to create something that was more visually tangible so you could actually see the result of 'moving the stone' or 'throwing the lever'."

As the game approached completion, the brothers started to consider potential publishers and they were thinking big. Bigger than Calisto at least. "We thought about showing it to Ultimate but never really dreamt that the Stampers would be interested, given their almost legendary status even then. We

LONE RIDER



If the Thomas brothers created the Pendragon games, and Manuel Caballero wrote *Imhotep*, that leaves one of Ultimate's C64 games outstanding. Who was responsible for the arcade shooter *Outlaws*? Hang on a second – those chunky character sprites sure look familiar…

Owning up to this Western-themed misfire, Dave reveals how it came about: "Around the time that *Dragonskulle* was finished, Bob and I were asked if we'd like to knock out another quick game that was to be released around Christmas 1985. We were both into the old Clint Eastwood 'Man With No Name' Spaghetti Westerns so we decided to do something relatively simple based around a lone rider freeing some poor hapless people from a gang of vicious outlaws – another highly original concept! It only took two or three weeks and it didn't sell very well as I remember, but it was quick and easy money."





» Oh mummy! Various creatures inhabit the tomb's corridors, sapping your precious strength.



» Here's the trophy that schoolboys Lee Goldstone and Matthew Porter won for submitting the first *Staff Of Karnath* solution to *Personal Computer Games* mag.



» In *Blackwyche*, Sir Arthur ditches his sports casual clothing for a dubious-looking cape. He also appears to be sporting a full and hearty moustache!

IF YOU PLAY ONE ARTHUR PENDRAGON GAME…

PLAY THIS…



ENTOMBED
Sir Arthur's Egyptian adventure is the best of the bunch and should be the first port of call for any doubting fans that believe that Ultimate only wrote great games for the Speccy. Just don't forget to grab a map before you begin otherwise you'll be bumbling around the first level for hours.

"MY BROTHER AND I WERE A BIT EMBARRASSED TO SHOW [TIM STAMPER] IN AS WE WERE BOTH WORKING IN OUR PARENTS' ATTIC AT THE TIME. WE NEEDN'T HAVE BEEN THOUGH AS IT LATER TURNED OUT THAT TIM AND HIS BROTHER CHRIS WERE WORKING FROM THEIR PARENTS' ATTIC TOO"
DAVE THOMAS

really thought *Karnath* looked very nice and might be something they'd be interested in, though we were under no illusions that what we had created was of the same quality and general slickness of Ultimate's Spectrum games. We had nothing to lose so we gave it a shot. We rang Ultimate and Tim Stamper arranged to come down and see the game. The following day a Porsche 911 Turbo turned up outside the door with Tim and his then-fiancée Carole Ward inside. My brother and I were a bit embarrassed to show them in as we were both working in our parents' attic at the time. We needn't have been though as it later turned out that Tim and his brother Chris were working from their parents' attic too! Tim was impressed with the game and immediately offered us a deal to produce a series of four Arthur Pendragon games on the spot."

The deal was done and Bob decided to jack in his job and join his brother in a partnership to produce the games for Ultimate – Bob created the graphics while Dave wrote the code. Despite being well-known perfectionists, the Stampers did not request any changes to *Karnath*. "They very much left it up to us to complete the game how we wanted to," says Dave. "I don't remember any interference from them on any level. We just handed the game over when it was complete, it was given a bit of QA and then released." The only stipulation was that their names were not revealed. "The Stampers didn't allow anyone to get credits on any of the original games they produced. This was strictly part of the deal and at the time we were so pleased to have got the deal we didn't really care. It did become a source of frustration later on in the series, hence why I sneaked those initials onto the last game."

The Staff Of Karnath debuted on the C64 in December 1984 and was a solid hit, selling more than 40,000 copies on its initial release. It also received excellent reviews from the magazines of the day, with *Personal Computer Games* awarding it a rating of 9/10 and calling it "a beautiful game that more than lives up to expectations". Work on the sequels started immediately and all three followed within 12 months of the original. The first, *Entombed*, saw Sir Arthur trapped inside a doom-filled temple – and he was even given a whip to complete the Indiana Jones homage. "*Entombed* took the longest to create as I decided to re-code the original *Karnath* engine to allow for a much bigger area to explore. This was subsequently used in *Blackwyche* and *Dragonskulle*."

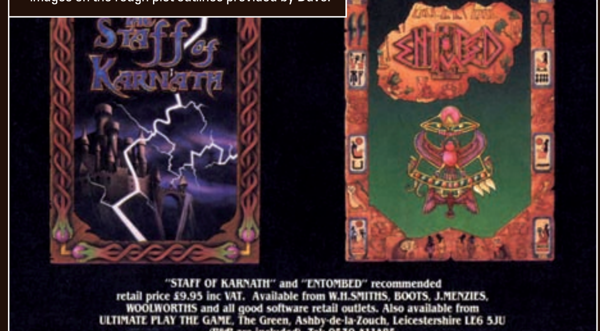
Blackwyche took place on a ghostly galleon, which was inspired by the HMS Victory moored in Portsmouth. "We'd seen it featured on TV and decided that a ship would be a good place for the third adventure. Bob and I went down to Portsmouth and had a good look around the ship, taking lots







» As with all early Ultimate games, the memorable cover art was drawn by Tim Stamper. He based the images on the rough plot outlines provided by Dave.



REMEMBER WHEN...



YOU FINALLY DESTROYED THE STAFF OF KARNATH?
Having collected all 16 pieces of the pentagram, you'd negotiate the castle crypt one last time and blast that bothersome staff with your Menhir spell. Cue flashing colours and whizzing sounds and a rather lacklustre 'congratulations' message that could not dampen the warm glow of satisfaction.

of photographs that we could use to base some of the graphics on." *Dragonskulle*, the final game, transported Sir Arthur to a deadly island loosely based on Skull Island from *King Kong*. "We had loads of these sorts of films on tape," he says. "Anything fantasy, science fiction or horror really. We watched lots of stuff to get ideas for the puzzles and visuals in the games."

Released during summer 1985, *Entombed* was a critical hit, earning a 93% rating and a coveted Gold Medal award from *Zzap!64* magazine, but both *Blackwyche* and *Dragonskulle* were slated for being too similar to the previous games. "Given the great reviews that we had for *Entombed* we felt there was little point in changing the successful formula," admits Dave. "So we were very disappointed with the reviews for the later games. *Dragonskulle* in particular had dreadful reviews, which was a big surprise to all of us as both the Stampers and ourselves thought this was the best of the four adventures. Looking back now I can see why *Entombed* was generally considered to be the best entry. I have a great affinity with all things Egyptian and Egypt is a country I have visited many times. I think for this reason I probably had a lot more enthusiasm for creating *Entombed* than the others and that may have been reflected in the reviews."

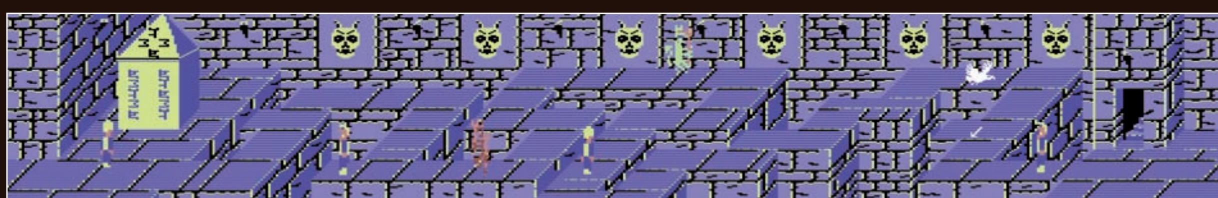
Sales tailed off too and in the end *Karnath* sold as many copies as the three sequels combined. This didn't bode well for the brothers as they received a cut of each copy sold rather than any advance payment. They did reap some rewards from *Karnath* but they weren't about to join Tim in the 911 Turbo club. "We certainly didn't earn the vast sums that were being bandied about at the time. I do remember buying my first car out of the initial royalty payment though – a Fiesta XR2 – so we were hardly into Porsche territory as you can tell!"

Following the release of *Dragonskulle*, the Stampers asked Dave and Bob if they wanted to develop games for their new target platform – the Nintendo Entertainment System. Over the next 18 months the pair sussed out the system and created various tech demos but nothing was given the green light. With no product there was no payment so they parted company with Ultimate. "We had a lot of fun doing the Pendragon adventures and found the Stampers to be great to work for during this time. We had a huge amount of respect for them and they were always very generous and warm people. This changed though when we moved onto the NES and we became increasingly frustrated with them. Who knows what we might have achieved had we been able to produce that initial NES game."

Undeterred, the pair retrained their sights on the Commodore 64. "We met up with Elite boss Steve Wilcox and he gave us *Buggy Boy*," says Dave. "I think this was a reluctant decision on his part as he felt that we'd been away from the Commodore 64 for so long that we may have 'lost touch'. Anyway, we got some excellent reviews when it was released and hence started our relationship with Elite."

Live And Let Die and *First Strike* followed, and while both were great games, it's the fantastic Commodore 64 version of *Buggy Boy* that they're best remembered for. Or at least it was, because now that the mystery has been solved and their story has been told we can finally credit Dave and Bob Thomas with creating the excellent adventures of Sir Arthur Pendragon. And with that, they've become part of the legend that is Ultimate Play The Game.









» The exit to the tomb is located in the room where you begin. Unfortunately there's a bloody great statue blocking the way. Time to get *Entombed*.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...



The working relationship between the Thomas's and the Stampers didn't end with the release of *Dragonskulle*. In the late-Eighties they returned to Ultimate (who'd since become Rare) and ported the arcade games *NARC* and *Arch Rivals* to the NES. They then moved to Ocean and worked on several more NES conversions. The final project they worked on as a partnership was the brilliantly titled but awful PC game *Guts 'N' Garters In DNA Danger* for Ocean. Following its release in 1997, Bob became a freelance web developer while Dave turned his hand to online and mobile games. His most recent release was *Crystal Quest*, an update of the arcade shooter that appeared on the Apple Mac in 1987.

FAMILY TREE

THE STAFF OF KARNATH

Ultimate's C64 debut was eagerly anticipated and didn't disappoint. It looked fantastic for a start, with those slick pseudo-3D backgrounds splashed with dazzling colours and filled with chunky character sprites. The puzzles were difficult and ever so devious, which made solving them all the more rewarding. On the downside, having to deliver each piece of the pentagram to the altar led to lots of weary backtracking, and the random nature of Sir Arthur's many spells resulted in too much trial and error, but overall *Karnath* was an arcade adventure for C64 owners to treasure.



ENTOMBED

The sequel did everything that a decent follow-up should. It was much bigger – the tomb Sir Arthur had to escape from was spread over seven floors – and the gameplay was updated so there was less backtracking and the unwieldy spell system was replaced with a single weapon (a trusty whip). And thanks to the game's richly-detailed setting, the air-starved chambers and maze-like corridors that you had to explore were dripping with ambience. But make no mistake, it was a tough challenge and the puzzles were even more taxing than before. Perhaps a little too taxing.



BLACKWYCHE

If *Entombed* was a whip-cracking leap forward from *Karnath*, *Blackwyche* was more of a peg-legged shuffle to the side. And while it wasn't as bad as the scathing review in *Zzap!64* made out – the game scored 53% but it was just as polished and as playable as its 93%-scoring predecessor – there was a definite sense of déjà vu hanging over the proceedings. *Blackwyche* should be praised though for lowering the difficulty level. The puzzles were easier – and dare we say it, logical – meaning that more players could realistically complete the game without cheating.





DRAGONSKULLE

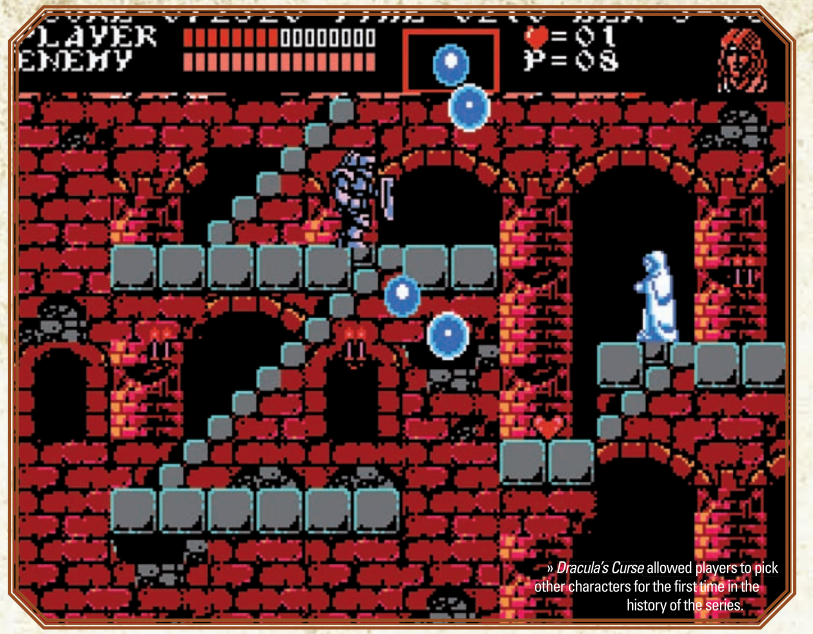
Being the fourth game in an increasingly similar series, *Dragonskulle* was overlooked by many. Which was a shame, as the final Pendragon adventure did at least introduce some fresh ideas. Instead of individual 'rooms' where you solved puzzles, the game featured a sprawling map with different types of rooms showing up again and again. In some you'd be blasting dragons, in others you'd be digging up graves, and so on. The emphasis was on exploring rather than puzzle solving, but getting lost in the series of similar-looking caves just wasn't that much fun.



The History Of Castlevania

JOIN **DAMIEN MCFERRAN** AS HE ARTFULLY DODGES SOME PESKY FLYING MEDUSA HEADS AND CHARTS THE HISTORY OF ONE OF VIDEOGAMING'S MOST BELOVED FRANCHISES




» *Dracula's Curse* allowed players to pick other characters for the first time in the history of the series.


» [*Curse Of Darkness*] Ayami Kojima's lush artwork really helps set *Castlevania* apart from other videogame series.

When Bram Stoker penned his classic horror novel *Dracula* in 1897 it's unlikely that he could have foreseen the incredible impact it would have on contemporary popular culture. Since its publication the book has gone on to become one of the most significant pieces of literature ever written and has inspired numerous movies, TV series and comic books, as well as establishing an entire horror genre. However, not in his wildest dreams could Stoker have anticipated that his seminal work would also provide the foundations for one of the most enduring videogame franchises of all time: *Castlevania*.

Although Konami's classic series features Stoker's legendary vampire antagonist and even goes as far as to tie itself in with the tumultuous events of his novel, the main focus is the seemingly unending duel between the forces of good and evil: namely the bold and courageous Belmont clan and malevolent Count Dracula himself. At the last count the series has spawned almost 30 different entries across a myriad of consoles, home computers, portable devices and mobile phones, and with the upcoming release of the Nintendo DS title *Castlevania: Order Of Ecclesia* and Wii fighting game *Castlevania Judgment*, we thought it was the perfect time to look back on the illustrious history of this classic gaming franchise.

Fangs For The Memories

As is the case with many classic Japanese videogame series, *Castlevania*'s genesis took place on the Nintendo Famicom (known as the Nintendo Entertainment System in the West). Released in September 1986 for the Famicom's Japan-only 'Disk System', the first game *Akumajo Dracula* (which is one of the many Japanese titles for the series and roughly translates as 'Demon Castle Dracula'), didn't really do a great deal to set itself apart from the flood of similar platform action titles available on the 8-bit machine at the time. However, it did boast one vital ingredient that other, more kiddie-friendly games lacked – atmosphere. From the foreboding visuals to the mean and moody soundtrack, *Akumajo Dracula* was as tense and spooky as any 8-bit videogame possibly could be. It was also incredibly challenging, with Simon Belmont – the game's protagonist – famously unable to jump off the many staircases that were dotted throughout Dracula's dusty abode.

Shortly after its Disk System debut, *Akumajo Dracula* was ported to the popular MSX2 home computer. Konami had a history of supporting this platform, with titles such as *Metal Gear 2*, *Snatcher* and *Hyper Sports* all appearing on it, so conversion wasn't that much of a surprise at the time. However, it's worth noting that the MSX2 version marks the European debut of the franchise (the MSX series of machines had quite a following in this region at the time), although it was published under the title *Vampire Killer*. In all honesty the MSX2 edition isn't a port in the strictest sense; it actually featured new areas and was structured differently, with emphasis placed on exploration rather than out-and-out bloodletting.

Given the success of the Disk System version, Nintendo decided to release *Akumajo Dracula* in cartridge format in 1987. In the same year *Akumajo Dracula* made the leap from East to West and was retitled *Castlevania*, with a European release following in 1988. The timing of the Western publication was perfect – the NES was effortlessly dominating the American market and this meant that quality games were likely to find a massive (and highly lucrative) audience. *Castlevania* was no exception to this and sold impressively, quickly establishing itself as a NES classic.

Konami's next move was an extremely brave one. At a time when most developers would slavishly stick to a blueprint once it had been proven successful (Capcom's dangerously similar *Mega Man* NES titles are a good example of this), the developer decided to make the inevitable sequel quite different from its predecessor. *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest* continued the tale of the first game but adopted a very different structure. Instead of being strictly level-based, the player was

"THE SERIES HAS SPAWNED ALMOST 30 DIFFERENT ENTRIES ACROSS A MYRIAD OF PLATFORMS"

Rogue's Gallery

AKMODAN II
Super Castlevania IV
1991

BALORE
Aria Of Sorrow
2003

BEEZLEBUB
Symphony Of The Night 1997

BEHEMOTH
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

DOGETHER
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

MECHA KNIGHT
The New Generation
1994

FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER
Castlevania 1987

GALAMOTH
Kid Dracula
1991

CREAKING SKULL
Aria Of Sorrow
2003

GRANFALLOON
Symphony Of The Night 1997

KARASUMAN
Symphony Of The Night 1997

STONE GOLEM
Super Castlevania IV
1991

MANTICORE
Aria Of Sorrow
2003

MEDUSA
Super Castlevania IV
1991

MINOTAUR
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

OLROX
Symphony Of The Night 1997

FLOATING SKULL
Super Castlevania IV
1991

ROWDAIN
Super Castlevania IV
1991

SIR GRAKUL
Super Castlevania IV
1991

SKULL KNIGHT
Dracula's Curse
1990

SLOGRA
Super Castlevania IV
1991

TALOS
Harmony Of Dissonance 2002

WEREWOLF
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

WHITE DRAGONS
Castlevania 64
1999

WYVERN
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

SEA SERPENT
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

GAIBON
Super Castlevania IV
1991

THE GARDENER
Castlevania 64
1999

GOLEM
The New Generation
1994

HELLHOUND
The New Generation
1994

HELL GARGOYLE
The New Generation
1994

HIPPOGRYPH
Symphony Of The Night 1997

DRACULA
Castlevania
1987

DEATH
Castlevania
1987

ELIZABETH BARTLEY
The New Generation
1994

SHAFT
Symphony Of The Night 1997

GILLES DE RAIS
Castlevania 64
1999

CARMILLA
Simon's Quest
1988

SUCCUBUS
Symphony Of The Night 1997

COUNT BRAUNER
Portrait Of Ruin
2006

ADRAMELECH
Circle Of The Moon
2001

BONE GOLEM
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

CERBERUS
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

WARLOCK
Vampire's Kiss
1995

CYCLOPS
Dracula's Curse
1990

DANCING GHOSTS
Super Castlevania IV
1991

DOPPELGANGER
Dracula's Curse
1990

HEADLESS KNIGHT
Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood 1993

LIVING ARMOR
Harmony Of Dissonance 2002

MAGIC ARMOR
The New Generation
1994

NECROMANCER
Circle Of The Moon
2001

THE HYDRA
Super Castlevania IV
1991

BIG PEEPING EYE
Harmony Of Dissonance 2002

QUEEN OF MOSS
The New Generation
1994

DRAGON SKELETON
Castlevania Chronicles
2001

SKULL SORCERESS
Vampire's Kiss
1995

GLASS KNIGHT
Haunted Castle
1988

VAMPIRE BAT
Castlevania
1987

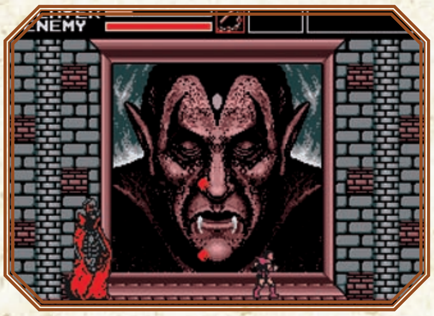
ANGEL MUMMY
Belmont's Revenge
1991

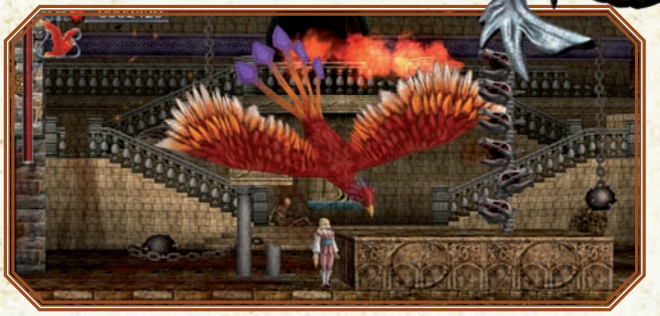
BIG GOLEM
Aria Of Sorrow
2003



» This artwork is taken from a little-known 3DO M2 arcade fighter called *Battle Tryst*.









expected to traverse Transylvania in search of Dracula's scattered body parts – a task that will help lift the curse that Dracula had placed on Simon immediately after their bloody encounter in the previous outing.

Again, like the original game *Simon's Quest* was released in Japan on the Famicom Disk System under the title *Dracula II: Noroi No Fuuin* (which translates as 'The Accursed Seal' in English), but a standard cartridge release followed in the West. *Simon's Quest* was part-RPG, part-action platformer, with items to purchase, non-player characters to interact with and even an innovative real-time 'day and night' system, where enemies were stronger (not to mention more abundant) in darkness and weaker when in the sunlight. Although the game showcases some neat ideas, it hasn't aged particularly well and the unusual gameplay comes across as clunky and poorly realised when set against its more illustrious forebears. Nevertheless, it remains a significant title in the lineage and pre-dates the semi-RPG overtones that would be adopted for the more recent entries.

Sensing that its vampire-killing franchise had legs, Konami decided that it would produce an arcade edition that would benefit from the considerable technical prowess that coin-munching machines boasted at the time. Sadly, while the resultant *Haunted Castle* certainly looks better than the 8-bit games that sired it, the gameplay is pretty dismal, with annoying enemies and bland action. As a result it remains something of a curiosity, but the connection with *Castlevania* was enough to ensure that it was granted a Japan-only budget release in 2006 on the PlayStation 2.

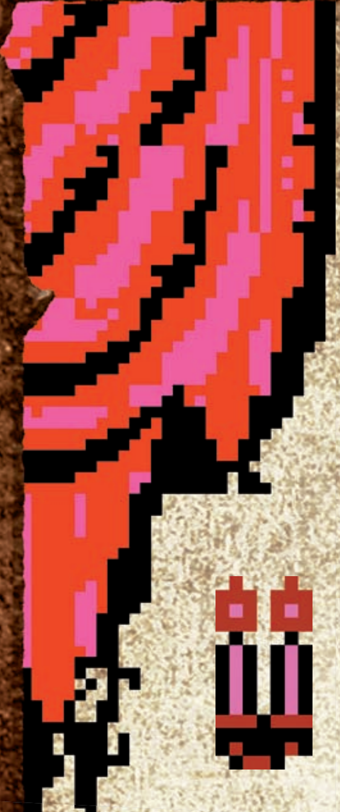
After this minor hiccup Konami turned its attention to Nintendo's latest piece of hardware – the portable Game Boy. Released in 1989, *Castlevania: The Adventure* (known as *Legend Of Dracula* in its native homeland) was one of the first games for the fledgling portable and to be brutally frank, it shows. Graphically it's rather basic and the gameplay is slow and plodding. Ironically, of the key staff behind this lacklustre instalment was none other than Masato Maegawa, who would later break away from Konami to form Treasure, the legendary creator of such classic titles as *Gunstar Heroes*, *Radiant Silvergun* and *Ikaruga*.

The series returned to its NES roots with the next chapter of the Belmont saga. *Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse* (*Legend Of Demon Castle* in Japan) took the core gameplay of the original game and essentially augmented it with additional characters, branching level progression and some seriously impressive presentation. Easily the best *Castlevania* release for the 8-bit Nintendo, the game remains a firm favourite even today and is generally regarded as one of the finest entries in the entire canon.

The 16-bit Era Dawns

With the release of the 16-bit SNES in 1991, Konami decided to revisit the original game and 'reboot' it using the fearsome technological capabilities of Nintendo's new hardware. At the time it seemed foolish to not focus on creating a title that added to the rapidly expanding *Castlevania* storyline, but when the game finally appeared such petty criticisms were forgotten. Despite a rather slow opening level, *Super Castlevania IV* is arguably one of the finest SNES games in existence – quite a feat when you consider it was also one of the first to be published for the machine. Although Simon Belmont was once again the centre of attention of the tale, the level design was entirely different from that witnessed in the NES edition, with all-new enemies and stages that took advantage of the Super Nintendo's innovative features. Who could forget the smoothly scaling Golem boss and the rotating cylinder room? As if all this graphical trickery wasn't enough, the game also boasted a hauntingly beautiful soundtrack that literally blew away anything heard in rival SNES games at the time.

Elsewhere, *Castlevania*'s handheld adventures continued apace with the sublime *Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge*, produced for the



Game Boy in the same year as *Super Castlevania IV*. Here, Konami redeemed itself for the previous portable title with a game that surely ranks as one of the finest on the monochrome handheld. The music is of particular note, with the usually grating sound chip of the Game Boy being made to sing some seriously catchy and toe-tapping tunes.

Although the success of the *Castlevania* series was built on the NES, Konami was slowly but surely coming around to the idea of branching out to other platforms. With the first 16-bit *Castlevania* reaffirming Konami's talent, the company's next move was eagerly awaited. Thankfully it didn't disappoint. *Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood* was released for NEC's PC-Engine Super CD-ROM in 1993 and although it removed some of the embellishments that had been so well received in *Super Castlevania IV* (the lack of multi-directional whipping being the most notable), what it added was considerable; the branching level progression from *Dracula's Curse* made a welcome return, only this time it offered much more in the way of replay value. The CD-ROM storage medium was used to grant the game a gorgeous anime-style introduction and the soundtrack remains a distinguished masterpiece. Amazingly, due to a petty disagreement between NEC's US distribution arm TTi (Turbo Technologies, Inc) and Konami, the game was never released outside of Japan and only very recently made its Western debut as an unlockable bonus in the 2007 PSP remake *Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles*.

Having taken the franchise to NEC's hardware, Konami then turned its attention to Nintendo's main rival Sega. *Castlevania: The New Generation* (known as *Castlevania: Bloodlines* in North America and *Vampire Killer* in Japan) proved that Konami was a talent to be reckoned with, no matter what hardware the company coded on. Not wanting to open up a can of worms here, but even the most ardent Sega fan would admit that the SNES generally played host to the more polished games of the 16-bit era. However, *The New Generation* was something of a revelation; not only did it sport tremendously detailed visuals, but it also featured sprite scaling and other effects that were typically not seen on the Mega Drive – here was a title that could truly give *Super Castlevania IV* a run for its money.

"VAMPIRE'S KISS IS NOW MUCH SOUGHT AFTER"

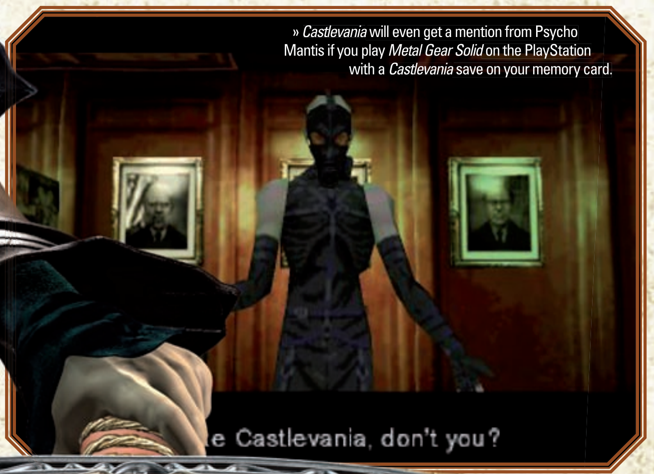
As the 16-bit era drew to a close, a semi-sequel to *Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood* was published for the SNES in 1995; sadly it's something of a disappointment. *Castlevania: Vampire's Kiss* (*Castlevania: Dracula X* if you're American) ditched the branching levels and replaced them with strictly linear ones. Also, the stage design was changed almost beyond recognition, with several amendments coming across as particularly amateurish. Despite its relatively poor critical reception, *Vampire's Kiss* has gone on to be something of a collector's item, largely due to the low print run coming at the end of the SNES's life span.

The IGA Years

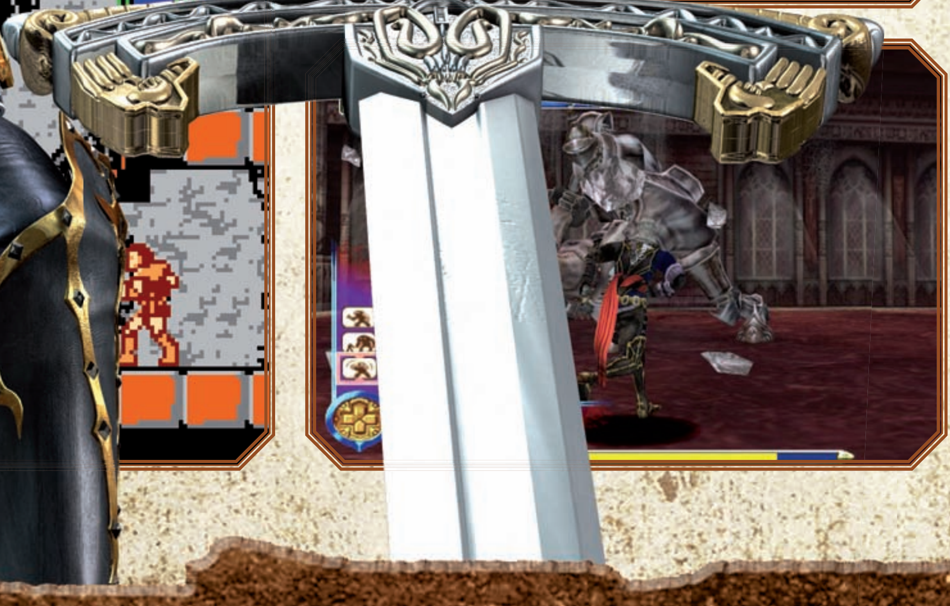
It's around this time that the enigmatic Koji 'IGA' Igarashi joins our tale. A long-time Konami employee, he would come to work on what is arguably the most important (not to mention popular) entry in the entire history of the *Castlevania* series – *Symphony Of The Night* – and would eventually become the producer of the entire series. Ironically for a game that has since passed into videogame legend, this 32-bit instalment was initially met with intense sceptism and even mild







» *Castlevania* will even get a mention from Psycho Mantis if you play *Metal Gear Solid* on the PlayStation with a *Castlevania* save on your memory card.





derision. When the first screens were published, many critics balked at the primitive 2D visuals and accused Konami of being too conservative to bring the series up to date in an era that was becoming rapidly obsessed with all things three-dimensional. What these early screens didn't illustrate was the massive sea change that had occurred in terms of gameplay; no longer was the world of *Castlevania* restricted to linear or merely 'branching' levels. The structure of this new game echoed that of the oft-misunderstood *Simon's Quest*, with the player being free to explore each nook and cranny of Dracula's fortress at will, providing they possessed the necessary items and equipment.

Because *SOTN* borrowed many elements from Nintendo's SNES hit *Super Metroid*, the game has, over time, been branded 'Metroidvania'. However, *SOTN* also brought many other ideas to the table. The most striking was the fact that for once, a Belmont descendant was not the main character of the story. Dracula's half-vamp, half-human son took centre stage and proved to be one of the most popular and enduring leads the series has ever seen. The game also introduced many RPG-style concepts, such as experience points, weapons, armour, spells and restorative items. Despite some rather puzzling reviews (the *Official UK PlayStation Magazine* was particularly harsh on the 'outdated' visuals and gameplay), *SOTN* swiftly established itself as a true classic of the 32-bit generation, being granted platinum status in the US and earning itself a 'Best of' re-release in Japan. It's worth noting that the European release was nothing short of a disaster, with Konami struggling to shift the initial small shipment of PAL copies. As a result the game is now quite rare in this format and worth a fair few bob these days, especially if you have the limited edition artwork book and soundtrack CD. A Japan-only Saturn conversion was also produced but although it featured additional levels and another playable character, it was afflicted by crippling slowdown and lacked many of the clever visual flourishes of the PlayStation original.

It's paradoxical that after releasing what is generally regarded as being the finest game in the series, Konami then proceeded to produce several distinctly underwhelming titles. *Castlevania Legends* on the Game Boy was the first title to be developed post-*SOTN* and even went as far as to include new poster boy Alucard as an end-of-level opponent, but it was an insipid effort that contained none of the invention and brilliance of its 32-bit forebear. However, while this fairly incongruous release did little to dent the enthusiasm of the *Castlevania* fan base, the next game in the lineage would leave a lasting scar that for some fans has not healed even to this day.

3D Or Not 3D

Taking into consideration that many established videogame franchises were being dragged kicking and screaming into the realm of 3D during this period, it was obvious that the same would happen to *Castlevania* at some point. During the development of *SOTN*, a full-3D adventure was announced for Nintendo's upcoming N64 console, with a few basic promotional movies showcasing the weirdly angular characters and the kind of action they'd be indulging in. However, the development time was a protracted one and when the game eventually limped out onto store shelves in 1999 it was a pared-down experience compared to what had been promised. Instead of offering four different characters, as was hinted in the trailer, it only contained two – Reinhardt Schneider (your typical Belmont-style whip-carrying hero) and Carrie Fernandez (a young girl with magical powers). However, a lack of playable protagonists was the least of *Castlevania 64*'s problems.



Vampire Killers

Simon Belmont

Arguably the most famous member of the Belmont lineage, Simon has appeared in more adventures than any other character (although technically five of his six entries are the same story retold). Kicking things off in 1691, he later defeated Dracula a second time in 1698.



John Morris

John Morris is connected to Bram Stoker's original *Dracula* novel – his father was Quincy Morris, who dies in the final epic confrontation with Vlad in Transylvania. Astonishingly, he's descended from the Belmonts and is therefore rather tasty with a whip.



Richter Belmont

A close second to Simon in the popularity stakes, Richter has starred in *Rondo Of Blood* and *SOTN* – two games that are etched into the consciousness of every *Castlevania* fan. His blue tunic means you're unlikely to lose sight of him when he's in the thick of things.



Alucard

Although he made a playable appearance in *Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse*, Alucard became a big fan's favourite thanks to his leading role in the most popular game in the series, *Symphony Of The Night*. It was a brave move by Konami to have a vampire in the starring role, but it paid off beautifully.



Soma Cruz

A high-school exchange student, Soma is transported to Dracula's Castle in the events of *Aria Of Sorrow*. He later learns that his fate is entwined with that of Dracula. Seeing as he comes from the year 2035, he sports rather more up-to-date attire than his fellow *Castlevania* heroes.



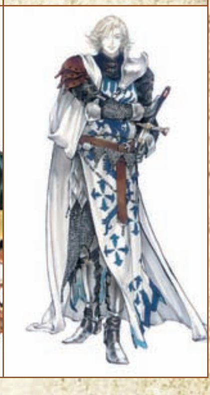
Maria Renard

Fans of the series thought Konami had gone soft when it added the cute Maria as an unlockable character in *Rondo Of Blood*, but her reappearance in *Symphony Of The Night* (she's playable in the Saturn version) has endeared her to purists. She's Richter's sister-in-law.



Leon Belmont

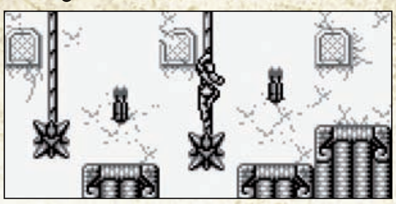
Technically the father of the vampire-hunting Belmonts, Leon was the first to take up the whip and face off against the forces of darkness. He also makes use of a magical gauntlet in order to save Sara, who was cruelly kidnapped by a nefarious fellow named Walter.



Handheld Horror



Castlevania: The Adventure (Game Boy)
One of the very first Game Boy games, *Castlevania: The Adventure* is a decidedly average release that is ultimately unsuccessful in transferring the excellent gameplay of the NES original to the small screen. It's slow, frustrating and graphically disappointing, and one for die-hard *Castlevania* completists only.



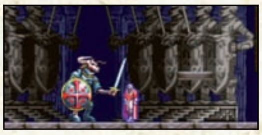
Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge (Game Boy)
Compared to the previous GB title this is a complete turnaround. Not only are the graphics excellent and music some of the best you'll hear on Nintendo's handheld, the gameplay is fantastic and the sheer variety on offer is nothing short of staggering.



Castlevania Legends (Game Boy)
Sadly Konami was unable to match *Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge* with this lacklustre sequel. The first game in the series to showcase a female Belmont, *Legends* feels like a throwback to *Castlevania: The Adventure*, with uninspired level design and monotonous action. Alucard makes an appearance as an end-of-level boss.



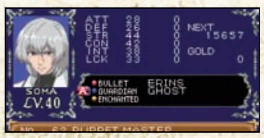
Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon (GBA)
Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon is a fairly successful attempt at bringing the gameplay of *Symphony Of The Night* to the small screen. The game is hugely enjoyable and offers plenty of challenge, however, the graphics are a bit dark so it's highly recommended you play this on a Game Boy Advance SP or DS.



Castlevania: Harmony Of Dissonance (GBA)
More *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night*-style action here, but this time Konami included improved graphics and far more detailed locations (at the expense of decent music, however – much of what is here could pass as Game Boy tunes). It's still not as deep as *Symphony Of The Night* but comes highly recommended regardless.



Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow (GBA)
Third time lucky for the Game Boy Advance; *Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow* is the first title on the machine to truly give its inspiration – *Symphony Of The Night* – a real run for its money. Boasting hundreds of different items, an innovative 'soul' collection system and one of the best plots in *Castlevania*'s long history, this is a real winner.



Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrow (DS)
A direct sequel to the brilliant *Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow*, this Nintendo DS title takes much of what made the Game Boy Advance game so good and merely improves on it. A throwaway touch-screen spell system can often be annoying, but ultimately this is an excellent entry in the series and comes very highly recommended.



Castlevania: Portrait Of Ruin (DS)
Following on from the events shown in the Mega Drive game *Castlevania: The New Generation*, *Castlevania: Portrait Of Ruin* once again adheres to the 'Metroidvania' blueprint, but the game introduces some new ideas of its own, as well – the ability to travel to different locations through paintings being the most notable.



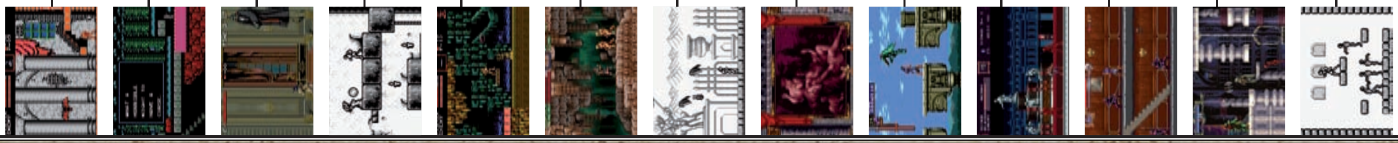
The transition from 2D to 3D hadn't exactly been a smooth one and it was clear that Konami had experienced some difficulty in keeping the traditional gameplay intact. The combat was dull, the auto-aiming unpredictable and the visuals weak. To make matters even worse several sections of the game degenerated into tiresome platforming assault courses where the 3D camera steadfastly refused to track the action correctly and one wrong move would send you plummeting back to the start.

It was clear that Konami simply hadn't had enough time to make the game as good as it possibly should have been, and this viewpoint was given credence when a semi-sequel quickly appeared in the same year under the title *Castlevania: Legacy Of Darkness*. Essentially the game that *Castlevania 64* should have been all along, it reinserted the missing characters that had been so cruelly removed during the development of the first game and generally polished things up. Sadly, it still suffered from many of the same flaws that hampered its predecessor and was proof enough to some fans that *Castlevania* belonged in 2D; to force the vampire-hunting epic to adopt a 3D perspective was, in the eyes of many, pure sacrilege.

Thankfully, it seemed that Konami was thinking the same thing, at least for a while. The next entry was *Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon* – the first of three 2D 'Metroidvania' titles for Nintendo's shiny new Game Boy Advance. Playing like a pared-down version of *SOTN*, this new game did much to restore faith in the series and was followed by two more GBA entries. *Castlevania: Harmony Of Dissonance* featured improved visuals but didn't really better *Circle Of The Moon* in the gameplay stakes; that fell to the third game – *Aria Of Sorrow* – which was hailed as a masterpiece comparable to *SOTN* itself. It also marked the first time that the franchise entered the future – 2035 to be exact

Timeline

- **CASTLEVANIA** [NES, 1987]
- **CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST** [NES, 1988]
- **HAUNTED CASTLE** [ARCADE, 1988]
- **CASTLEVANIA: THE ADVENTURE** [GB, 1989]
- **CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE** [NES, 1990]
- **SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV** [SNES, 1991]
- **CASTLEVANIA II: BELMONT'S REVENGE** [GB, 1991]
- **AKUMAJO DRACULA** [SHARP X68000, 1993]
- **DRACULA X: RONDO OF BLOOD** [PC-E, 1993]
- **CASTLEVANIA: THE NEW GENERATION** [MEGA DRIVE, 1994]
- **CASTLEVANIA: VAMPIRE'S KISS** [SNES, 1995]
- **CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT** [PLAYSTATION, 1997]
- **CASTLEVANIA LEGENDS** [GB, 1998]

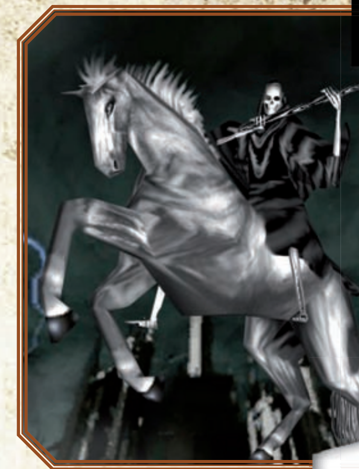












– although thankfully Dracula's castle wasn't populated by laser-gun-wielding zombies in spacesuits.

After returning to glorious 2D form with the GBA releases, Konami again felt confident enough to dabble in 3D. *Castlevania: Lament Of Innocence* was released for the PS2 in 2003 and attempted to unify the gameplay of *SOTN* with the 3D combat of Capcom's stylish *Devil May Cry*. The result wasn't a total write-off by any means, and even the most hardened 3D cynic would have to admit that it was all quite enjoyable, but big mistakes were made in the construction of the game. The level design was featureless and repetitive, with many of the larger levels simply repeating textures and room designs. Mindful of the issues raised by fans over *Lament Of Innocence*, producer Igarashi set about crafting the next 3D adventure in the series. *Castlevania: Curse Of Darkness* again used a 3D viewpoint but this time Igarashi attempted to accommodate more of the gameplay elements made famous by the 'Metroidvania' titles. Although some pretty decent concepts were featured, the game felt as empty as its predecessor and *Curse Of Darkness* was yet another ultimately unsuccessful attempt to take vampire slaying into the third dimension.

Thankfully, the disappointment of the home console versions was negated by the uniformly excellent Nintendo DS releases. *Dawn Of Sorrow* was a direct sequel to the GBA release *Aria Of Sorrow* and once again sees the player stepping into the shoes of exchange student Soma Cruz. *Portrait Of Ruin* swiftly followed in 2006 and attempted to tie itself in with the events of the Mega Drive title *Castlevania: The New Generation*, with the lead character Jonathan Morris being the son of the aforementioned John Morris. Eric Lecarde, the second playable character in *The New Generation*, also makes a cameo appearance. The portable fun didn't end there, though; in 2007 Konami finally answered the prayers of fans in the West by releasing a PSP remake of *Dracula X: Rondo Of Blood*. Featuring new 2.5D visuals and gorgeous artwork by *Castlevania* veteran Ayami Kojima, *Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles* also contained the original game and *SOTN* as unlockable extras.

And that brings us neatly to the present. The next release is the third DS title, called *Castlevania: Order Of Ecclesia*. It's something of a deviation from the norm, adopting a female lead character (who isn't a Belmont, as far as we can ascertain at this stage), but 'Metroidvania' fans will be pleased to know it sticks to the tried and tested template laid down by *SOTN*. After that we can look forward to the dubious delights of the recently announced *Castlevania Judgment* – a 3D fighting game for the Wii. To say *Judgment* has divided opinion among fans is like saying that passing wind in the face of a complete stranger is bad manners; the general consensus at the moment seems to be that Konami is one can short of a six pack. However, stranger things have happened and if the developer can infuse the dangerously stagnant one-on-one fighting game genre with some of that time-honoured *Castlevania* magic then this might just surprise us.

Whatever happens, the *Castlevania* series currently finds itself at an impasse. Although it continues to appear on the leading home console formats, fans will argue vehemently that the portable editions are the only *Castlevania* titles worth bothering with right now; by and large they stay true to the core principles of the series and keep the battle between good and evil rooted firmly in 2D. How long this can continue for is anyone's guess and it's likely that Igarashi and his team at Konami will put the disappointment of *Curse Of Darkness* behind them to explore the realm of 3D in the future; one can only hope that they finally get it right when they do.

Canned Castlevanias

Just like any other popular game series *Castlevania* has had a few false starts during its history, the most famous being the much-hyped Dreamcast epic *Castlevania: Resurrection*. Announced when Sega's 128-bit super console was first launched, this 3D action title featured a zany time-travelling storyline and even went as far as to place a scantily clad Sonia Belmont – previously seen in the terrible Game Boy title *Castlevania Legends* – as one of the lead characters. However, there have been other canned titles – apparently a 2D adventure was in development for Sega's 32X that never saw the light of day, although it's rumoured that many of the sprites were carried over to *SOTN*. Speaking of *Symphony Of The Night*, a conversion was apparently underway for Tiger Electronics' oft-derided game.com handheld, but development was halted when the plug was pulled on the underperforming hardware.

CASTLEVANIA 64 [N64, 1999]
CASTLEVANIA: LEGACY OF DARKNESS [N64, 1999]
CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES [PLAYSTATION, 2001]
CASTLEVANIA: CIRCLE OF THE MOON [GBA, 2001]
CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE [GBA, 2002]
CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW [GBA, 2003]
CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE [PS2, 2003]
CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW [DS, 2005]
CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS [PS2/XBOX, 2005]
CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN [DS, 2006]
CASTLEVANIA: ORDER OF SHADOWS [MOBILE, 2007]
CASTLEVANIA: THE DRACULA X CHRONICLES [PSP, 2007]
CASTLEVANIA: ORDER OF ECCLESIA [DS, 2008]
CASTLEVANIA JUDGMENT [Wii, 2008]



THE MAKING OF

Terrormolinos







» This 'cheeky' text adventure game is still being played today via emulation.

IT RAINED ALL SUMMER AND **CRAIG GRANNELL** WANTS TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL. THEREFORE, QUIZZING TREVOR LEVER AND PETER JONES ABOUT CULT PACKAGE HOLIDAY ADVENTURE TERRORMOLINOS SEEMS THE WAY TO GO. AFTER ALL, WHAT CAN GO WRONG ON A HOLIDAY?



» [Spectrum] Although the woman thought she looked good, her foul odour cleared the beach within seconds.

IN THE KNOW



» PUBLISHER: MELBOURNE HOUSE

» DEVELOPER: TREVOR LEVER AND PETER JONES

» RELEASED: 1985

» PLATFORMS: ACORN ELECTRON, AMSTRAD CPC, BBC MICRO, C64, ZX SPECTRUM

» GENRE: TEXT ADVENTURE

» EXPECT TO PAY: £1

Retro Gamer: How did you guys end up working together in the first place?
Trevor & Peter: We were in bands during the late-Seventies and early-Eighties and found we were a good creative team: Trevor had loads of half-formed ideas and Pete was good at quality control and picking out the bits that could work.

After the band, we were looking to do other creative things. We didn't plan to get into text adventures, but Trevor was into computers and had a copy of The Quill. One evening, after a couple of beers, we had a play on it. We started writing *Hampstead* just for fun, with no idea of the ending and no idea it was something anyone other than the two of us would ever see.

RG: What was the genesis of Terrormolinos?
T&P: *Terrormolinos* began with *Hampstead*, which was a satire. Most adventures at the time came from the same fantasy mould. We wanted something that would poke fun at the conventions of the genre, be set in the real world, with real people and real problems, and amuse us. To our astonishment, the game companies wanted it.

Hampstead did well critically and commercially, and so *Terrormolinos* was our follow-up. It was a more integrated concept – a Donald McGill seaside postcard in game form. Melbourne House initially didn't like it much; it was too weird for them. But in hindsight, it's a lot less weird than *Hampstead*.

RG: What was your working process?
T&P: We'd get together once or twice a week for a writing session, put the kettle on and wait ages for The Quill and our last save to load. We had pages of ideas and sketches, along with maps of locations and objects, all over the floor. We then had to squeeze our ideas into the low memory of the machines we were writing for. Often we'd have to compromise the location description text to leave space for funny responses to whatever the player did in each setting.

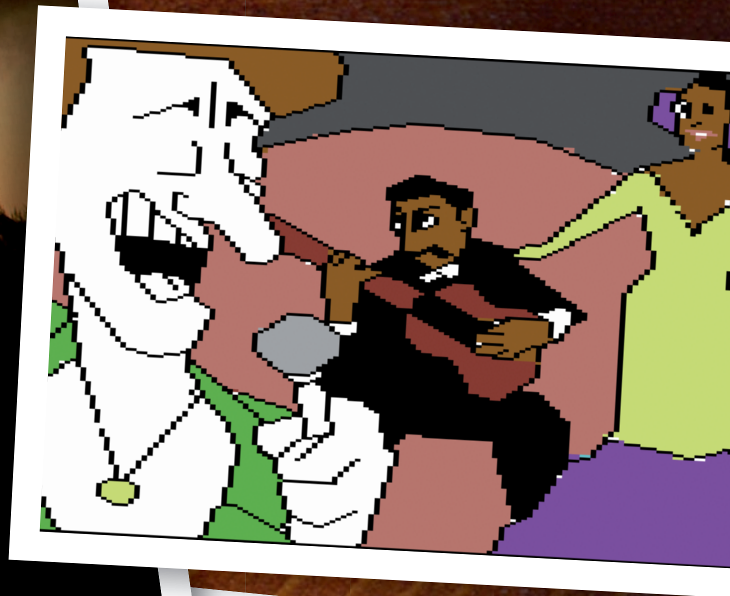
RG: Were the situations and puzzles autobiographical or inspired by events you'd heard about?
T&P: They were classic package-holiday disaster stories. The scenario to was survive a two-week holiday on the Costa Brava, and prove it by taking photographs in certain key situations. The scenarios were meant to be cartoony in concept.

RG: What was the thinking behind the photographs?
T&P: There was an add-on to The Quill that allowed you to have pictures as part of the text. Graphics were becoming de rigueur, so we came up with the idea of watching pictures 'develop' on screen like Polaroids. This was a way of getting round the low power of early home computers. You'd end up with a McGill-style picture once it loaded – in living 'Saucivision'.



» In a game whose tagline parodies that of *Jaws 2*, your family must survive a holiday on the Costa Del Sol.





» Trevor's Donald McGill-inspired sketches formed the basis for the game's saucy photographs.







DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

HAMPSTEAD
SYSTEMS: ACORN ELECTRON, BBC MICRO, C64, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1984

TERRORMOLINOS
SYSTEMS: ACORN ELECTRON, AMSTRAD CPC, BBC MICRO, C64, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1985

DODGY GEEZERS
SYSTEMS: ACORN ELECTRON, AMSTRAD CPC, BBC MICRO, C64, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1986

This led to the idea of holiday snaps and from there to surviving a holiday in Spain and returning with the photographs as proof. Trevor sketched the images after getting some saucy Donald McGill postcard books from the library, and someone at Melbourne House knocked them into shape. As most of the postcards depicted beach scenes, this set the tone that the pictures would take throughout the game.

RG: The game is littered with instant deaths. Was this part and parcel of mid-Eighties adventure games, or were you trying to make the game last longer?
T&P: In the cartoon world, violent death is amusing. Think of Tom and Jerry: no one gets hurt. It was more trying to make the game fun and cartoon-like. You could have fun trying to kill yourself in different ways. Most people got into the habit of saving before trying anything too risky.

RG: How did using adventure creator The Quill help and hinder the production?
T&P: Because we weren't programmers, we simply worked with the tools that were available to us at that time. A programmer might have felt somewhat restricted, but we were just looking to create a story, an atmosphere and make people laugh. So we came up with gags and situations that could be created within The Quill's environment.

RG: Did you omit anything from the game that you would have liked to include?
T&P: We had hoped that the photographs would fade in from black into a Polaroid-type frame. We also wanted players to be able to print them as a set upon completion of the game. For those that completed *Hampstead*, the publishers sent out diplomas ('So-and-so has Attained Hampstead'), so printing out the pictures would have been the equivalent.

RG: Terrormolinos gained many accolades at the time. Were you happy with the response you got, and what do you think of your creation today?
T&P: The interest *Hampstead* generated helped create a profile for *Terrormolinos* – people knew what to expect. We also got a friend to take pictures of us at Heathrow, dressed as tourists, and these were used quite extensively by the press. Looking back at *Terrormolinos*, of all the games we wrote it was the best – a simple idea based squarely on British popular culture.

When we started, we knew what we were writing and who we were writing for. This was different from Hampstead because we had no idea of the ending when we started. We are amazed that there are people still playing our games on emulators – we just hope the jokes stand the test of time.



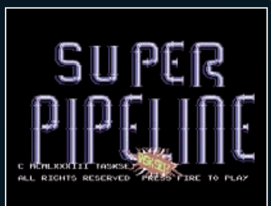
THE MAKING OF...



SUPER PIPELINE

BACK IN YE OLDE STAR INN, THE BRIDLINGTON PUB WHERE THEY USED TO DRINK AND THINK TOGETHER DURING TASKSET DAYS, ANDY WALKER AND PAUL HODGSON SPILL THE BEANS ON THEIR MOST FAMOUS CREATIONS. PAUL DRURY FOLLOWS THE CLASS STRUGGLE

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** TASKSET
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1983 AND 1985
- » **GENRE:** FLANGE-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5

It all started, appropriately enough, with a leaky pipe. One morning in late 1981, Andy Walker, bleary eyed, rejuvenating coffee mug in hand, wandered down to his arcade workshop, conveniently located in the backroom of his house-cum-shop on Bridlington High Street.

"I could hear the drip. It's never good, is it?" explains Andy, one member of the creative team behind *Super Pipeline* and *Super Pipeline II*, rolling his eyes. "We had these Intertec Superbrains, with CP/M 18 as the operating system, and the drip had missed one by two inches. I remember thinking, 'That's just about everything I own'."

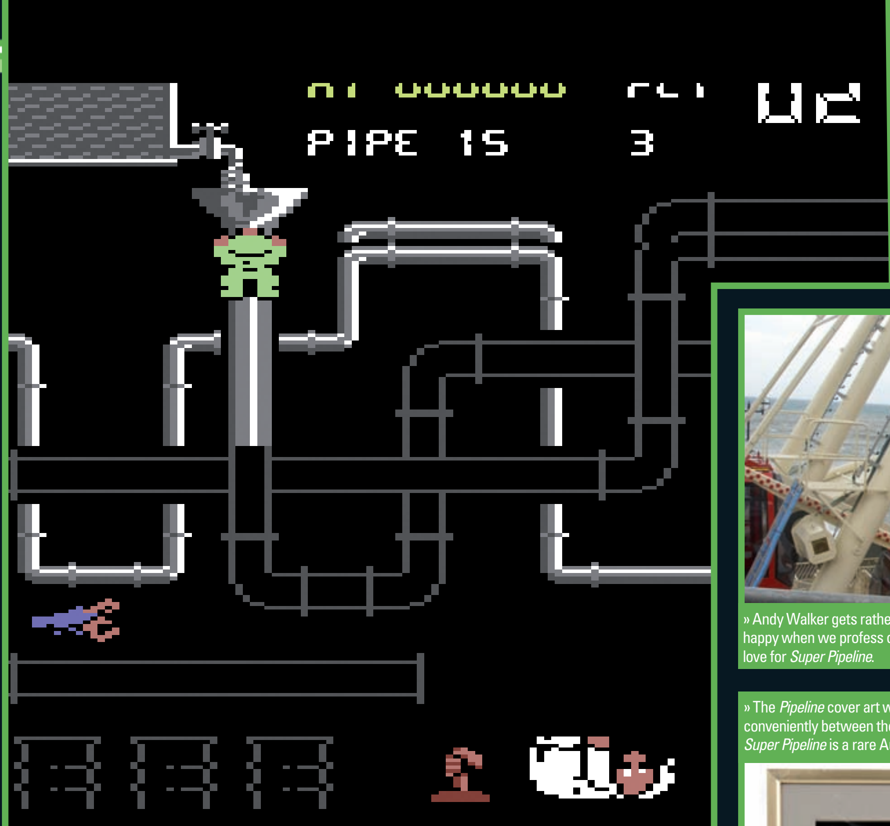
"Health and safety nightmare," quips Paul Hodgson, another member of the creative team, who was still at school at this point, but is fully aware of the folklore. "Open-frame 26-inch monitors with 30 kilovolts going through them and no earth."

"And could we get a plumber? Could we hell," continues Andy. "So my dad turned up. He had some tools and a wrench. He was an accountant by trade, but he loved DIY. He would wear this little coat over the top of his suit and would act like a foreman. He did the job and nobody thought anything of it at the time. I'm pretty sure it didn't go in the 'Ideas Bag' that day. We never had formal brainstorm sessions. You had to mix it with the workaday stuff. You might have a great idea but you had a three-week deadline to get this job out to earn some pennies, so we'd say for God's sake don't lose the idea – put it in the bag. *Pipeline* began there."

Several weeks passed before Andy dug out the little yellow slip that he'd scrawled "pipes and leaks" on after that near-disastrous morning. The idea of people on pipes seemed original. Coding-wise, it could share the same logic as *Hunky Doorkey*, the monk-based maze game they were currently working on for Chris and Tim Stamper, the brothers that would go on to found Ultimate and later Rare, but balancing on rickety plumbing rather than being hemmed in by walls would give it a different look and feel. Using the custom Zilec board provided by the Stamper brothers, Andy and his graphics guru Andy Rixon got to work on *Pipeline*, the arcade game. Soon, a shiny pipe was wiggling down the right-hand side of the screen. A host of angry enemies clambered up a ladder on the left, flinging various objects at your band of four little plumbers, all of equal status. You controlled the chap at the front, the other three followed, and you could defend yourself with the same tools you used to mend any damage caused by flying debris. Work progressed as far as a fully playable version until the crew reached a different sort of blockage themselves.

"It just wasn't fun," sighs Andy. "Mechanically it all worked, but the plan of the pipes was wrong, there was no rush at the end and we just lost interest."

And there it stood in the corner of the office, while the arcade world moved on. Despite huge commercial success with *The Pit* (a lucrative deal with Centuri to license the game for a whopping $136 per machine provided a steady stream of



» Foreman Fred feels a tool…



» An RG exclusive - a never-before seen concept screen for Super Pipeline 2 from November 1984, showing features that never made it into the final game. 'I think things were meant to come out of the doors every now and again, and turn off the taps,' remembers Paul, who came across this 35mm slide whilst looking through old photos for this article. 'Maybe someone wants to do Super Pipeline 3?'



» Andy Walker gets rather happy when we profess our love for *Super Pipeline*.



» The *Pipeline* cover art was done by Andy Bembridge Printers, located conveniently between the Taskset offices and Ye Olde Star Inn. The blue-cased *Super Pipeline* is a rare Australian release by Corgi games.



royalty payments), it was becoming increasingly difficult for a small developer based in a quaint northern seaside resort to compete with the likes of Taito and Atari. Besides, home computers were emerging as a viable alternative and so Andy placed a speculative 'Programmers Wanted' advert in the *Bridlington Free Press*.

"There couldn't be any in the whole of East Riding, let alone Brid… but I thought I'd find out," Andy recalls. "And there were lots. A silly number applied and we must have interviewed a dozen. Paul impressed me with his absolute commitment to machine code but what really got him in was that he could destroy his own PET…"

Before you get on the phone to the RSPCA, he's referring to Commodore's early green-screen computer. "I knew the poke on the PET 2001 that would stall the flyback and wreck the machine," confirms Paul, with a grin. "Actually one of the first things I did after I got the job in May 1983 was write a cross assembler so I could use the PET to develop for… oh, these words still dig deep into my heart… the Oric. That machine was even flawed as a doorstop. It was the right shape but didn't have any rubber feet…"

Paul valiantly knocked out *Dig Dog* for Tangerine's far from dream machine, while Mark Buttery, recruited at the same time to the newly formed Taskset, worked alongside him on *Cosmic Convoy* for the C64. The latter's hardware sprites, decent sound chip and architecture close to the company's arcade roots convinced the team the Commodore was the way to go, so when it came to deciding on their next project, the boys only had to look in the back room.

"*Pipeline*, the arcade cabinet was still set up when I arrived," explains Paul. "Well, if you can call an open-frame monitor, a bare board next to it and a naked power supply an arcade cabinet, that is. We all used to play it at lunchtime. There was just something about it we liked, but we weren't sure what."

Andy continues the tale. "We dug out Andy Rixon's old bitmaps and we had these KoalaPad graphics tablets. We wrote this little utility so we could put the ROM into the C64 and muck about with the graphics. As soon as Rixon got the big guy's nose to go up and down as he walked we thought, that's it, that's funny, we're in. And it started to change…"

The addition of a little postcard humour to the game was just the start. The aspect changed from portrait to landscape, giving the pipe more room to twist and turn. The ladder switched to the right and later levels introduced *Pong*-style barriers to deflect your bullets. Yes, your plumber was now armed and could hop between pipes, taking potshots at his unlikely foes. "We put the adversaries on the pipes with you, so it was more in your face," notes Andy. We mention the unpleasantness of being cornered by a lobster, an enemy that can only be taken from behind. Andy chuckles. "That came from Kaye, our secretary, whose boyfriend was a fisherman. She came home one day and found a lobster in her bath. She

THREE-LETTER WORDS

"Chris Stamper was a techno whiz," says Andy. "Absolutely brilliant but he didn't think he was, which made it really disarming when you talked to him. He'd assume I knew what a hardware sprite generator ought to look like and why his design was so special. Lots of pointing at bits of green wire and me nodding. It was really good hardware. They reasoned if they could set up lots of satellite writing stations using this setup they'd have a business." And so Andy Walker Electronics became the Brid Studio of sorts of the Stamper's early arcade career and the legacy of those development days can be seen in the high-score table in *Super Pipeline*, which despite having the C64's keyboard available, opts to have your little fella hammering out your initials. "Actually I buried something deep in the code, so if you tap in a rude word, the workman blushes," chuckles Andy. One equally cheeky touch didn't make the final cut, reveals Paul. "This reviewer called Piers Ilya gave *Dig Dog* a particularly bad review and Andy wanted me to put his face in the game so you could shoot him. In the end, he just gets mentioned in the instructions: Workmen are expendable, like Ilya!"



THE MAKING OF…

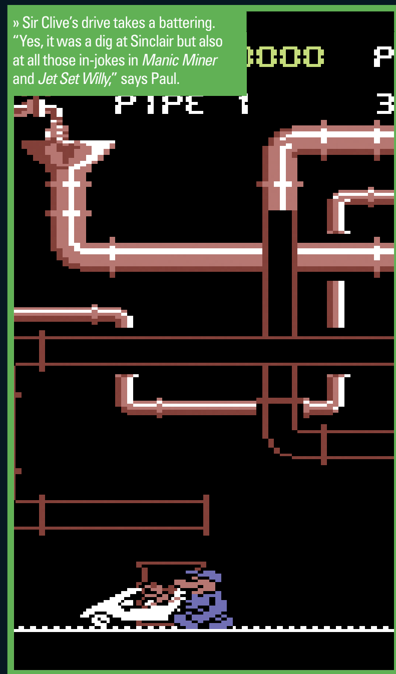
SUPER PIPELINE



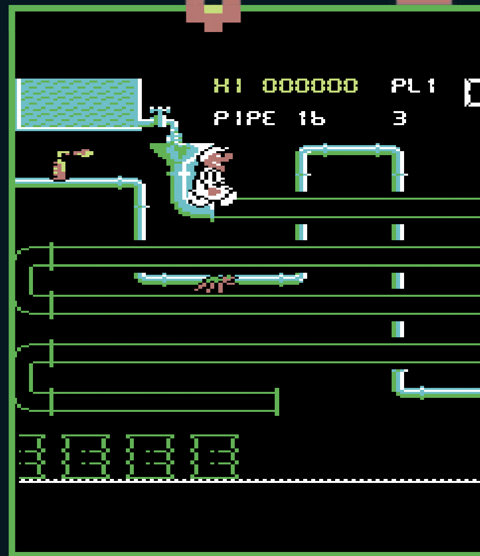
SPIES LIKE US

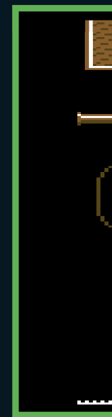


"We would all contribute to the coding," says Andy on Taskset's way of working. "We had specialities but people would co-operate on what needed doing and I seriously don't remember any arguments. The screens were in front of the window and we'd all be staring intently at them, over each other's shoulders, these constantly changing images. The people over the road thought we were spies!" "Mind you, we thought they were a knocking shop," adds Paul. "They had a strange set of customers going in and out. Three men turned up at 9am and by half past it was steamed up. Turned out to be an optical grinding lab." That's not a euphemism, folks. Andy and Paul continued their collective approach even after the demise of Taskset, collaborating on judo sim *Uchi Mata* and the conversion of *Dragon's Lair* for the Spectrum among many others. Paul now produces technology for the bingo industry and Andy is gainfully employed doing R&D for the fruit machine business. Most years you'll find both of them at the ATEI, the annual arcade trade show. Why not buy them a beer to say thanks?

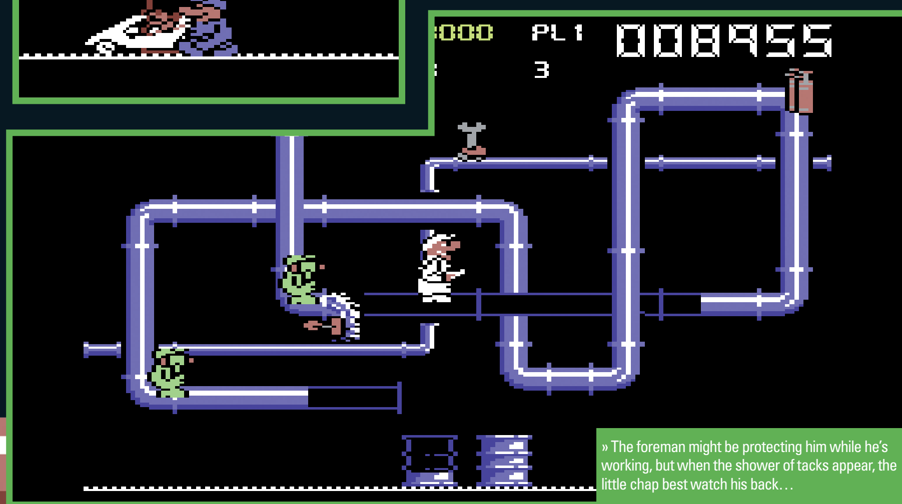


» Sir Clive's drive takes a battering. "Yes, it was a dig at Sinclair but also at all those in-jokes in *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*," says Paul.









» The foreman might be protecting him while he's working, but when the shower of tacks appear, the little chap best watch his back…



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE PIT (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1982

JAMMIN'
SYSTEM: C64
YEAR: 1983

UCHI MATA
SYSTEM: C64
YEAR: 1986



was complaining about it the next day, so it was a case of put that on the pipes lads, it's in!"

Most crucially, though, was a division of labour. Not in terms of programming – the quartet of Paul, both Andys and Mark all contributed code – but on screen. You were Foreman Fred, the gun-toting gaffer, forever followed by a diminutive, nameless workman, who actually did any pipe-mending required. "He doesn't just walk behind him," explains Paul. "He does exactly what the foreman does, like he's been told to. It was a tremendously difficult bit of code to try to make the little guy follow the foreman, getting him to cross pipes… things went wrong and it just looked funny. You could leave him mending a pipe and then he'd just wait until you went to pick him up. We put something in so eventually he'd just wander off. Typical plumbers mate!"

"The relationship between those two guys is downright funny," chuckles Andy. "And of course the workman was expendable. It's the ultimate capitalist side of things. Actually, it was one of the issues that started the falling out with Tony Gibson. He really didn't like that."

But the gaming public certainly did. *Super Pipeline* (the prefix was added to signify the leap in class over the unreleased arcade original) was joined by Gibbo's *Jammin'* and with a brace of hits, Taskset had truly arrived on the software scene. The company's distinctive graphical style, superlative soundtracks and willingness to embrace diverse genres earned it a reputation for quality and originality… so it was something of a surprise that after 1984's duo of shoot-'em-up *Gyropod* and slap-'em-up *Poster Paster*, it chose to return to the pipes.

"*Super Pipeline* was fine for its time. We thought we were on it with the C64 but as the months unfolded, we realised just how much more this machine could do," explains Andy. "*Super Pipeline II* was born out of that realisation."

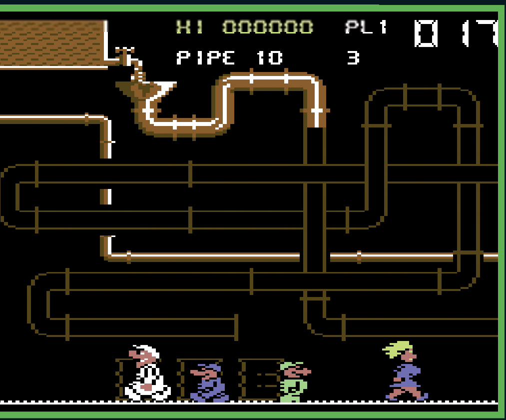
Andy, using his passing resemblance to Noel Edmonds perhaps, swapped Taskset's temperamental Sage 4 multi-user system with a London shipping firm for a new development setup of five networked Apple IIs with a hard drive the size of a pub table, and the boys were off. A coding trick they'd developed in *Gyropod*, allowing more than eight sprites to be displayed at once, meant Foreman Fred now had two lackeys to shepherd.

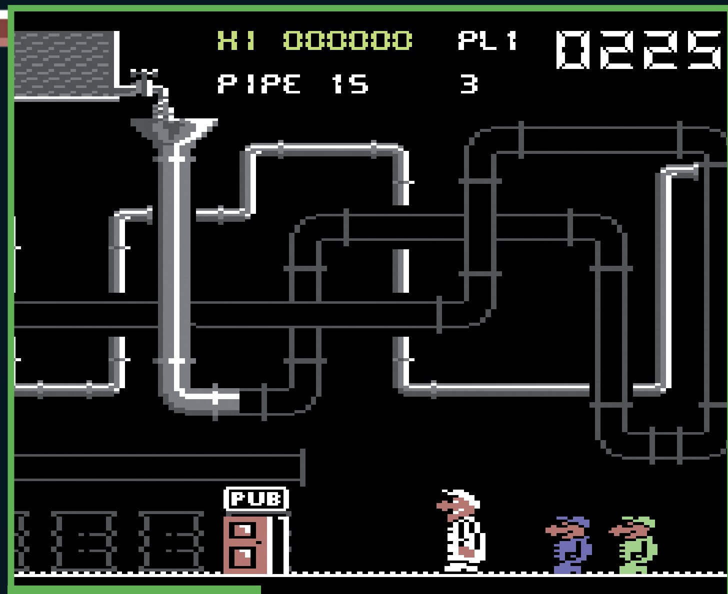
"Looking back, it's a deeply psychological thing," muses Paul. "You'll keep this little guy around while you need him but when the chips are down, you'll save your own skin. It's a sobering thought that 25 years down the line, we may be responsible for many of society's ills. A generation growing up thinking they matter and no one else does."

"Ah, but this is first-person," adds Andy. "You are responsible. And if they die, it's your doing. And you really feel it. But you filled the barrel."

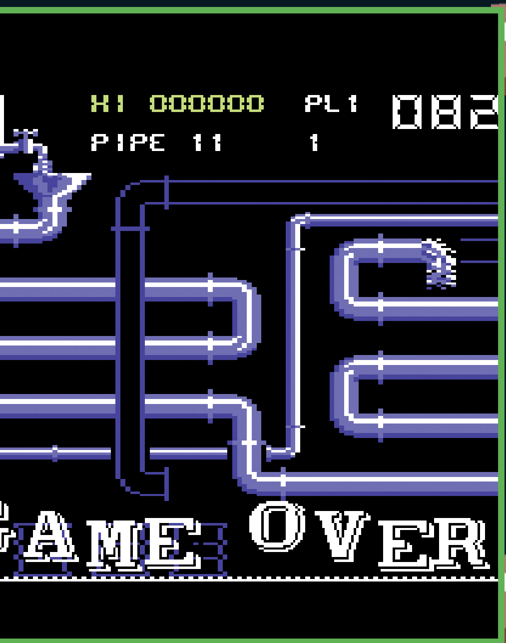
That overriding imperative to keep the water flowing, forcing you to alternate between benevolent protector of your

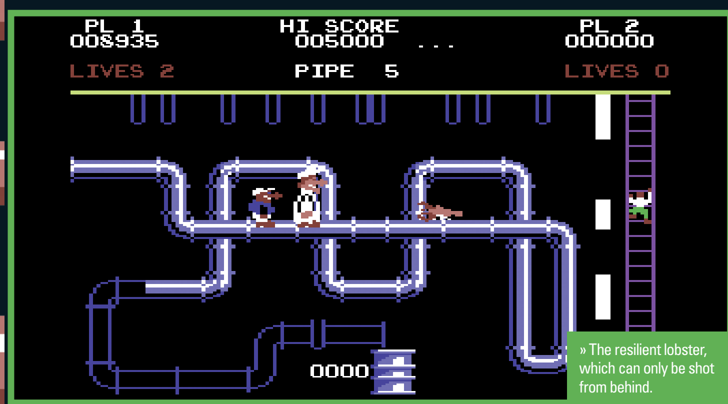






» The pub in this interlude is of course The Star. "It was Brid's trendy pub," Paul assures us. "No sawdust and few fights."





» The resilient lobster, which can only be shot from behind.



"WITH SUPER PIPELINE AND TONY GIBSON'S JAMMIN', TASKSET TRULY ARRIVED ON THE SOFTWARE SCENE"

industrious charges and heartless exploiter willing to sacrifice them to keep yourself alive, is what makes both games so compulsive. The sequel just does everything with more panache. The play area is increased by replacing the ladder with a small pipe upon which your increased array of foes enter, including the indestructible shower of tacks and the six-legged Venusian pipe spider (Andy Rixon just couldn't get eight legs to animate on a sprite, apparently). Your precious water supply is now finite, adding a real sense of urgency, and the frenetic action is accompanied by a memorable interrupt-driven soundtrack (done using the vertical blank interrupt, tech fans), produced by Paul, who used his classical training to do a four-part reworking of the, erm, *Ying Tong Song*.

"We could all stand next to *Super Pipeline II* and be proud. That's everything we could do, best," states Andy. Paul agrees. "We put our faces in that one!"

He's referring to the bouncing heads of the Taskset team seen in one of the lovely interludes between levels, which also feature sweet little scenes of Sinclair C5 smashing, dwarf dancing and a workman being distracted by a busty blonde. "That was our secretary, Ann. Realistic? Oh, she'd recognise herself," confirms Paul.

The game was full of such flourishes and helped propel sales to over 50,000. Yet just as Taskset seemed to be at its creative peak – *Super Pipeline II* was a joint release with the excellent drink-'em-up *Bozo's Night Out* – the company was hit by reduced margins from the big retailers, a serious cash flow problem and some highly dubious business practice.

"A retailer that shall remain nameless phoned me up and said, 'You're actually number five in the charts, but you're nowhere until you pay us 'X' pounds for shelf space'. Everybody knew that happened but I wasn't ready for him demanding we pay for a Mediterranean holiday for him and his family as well. That I couldn't do. I was seething."

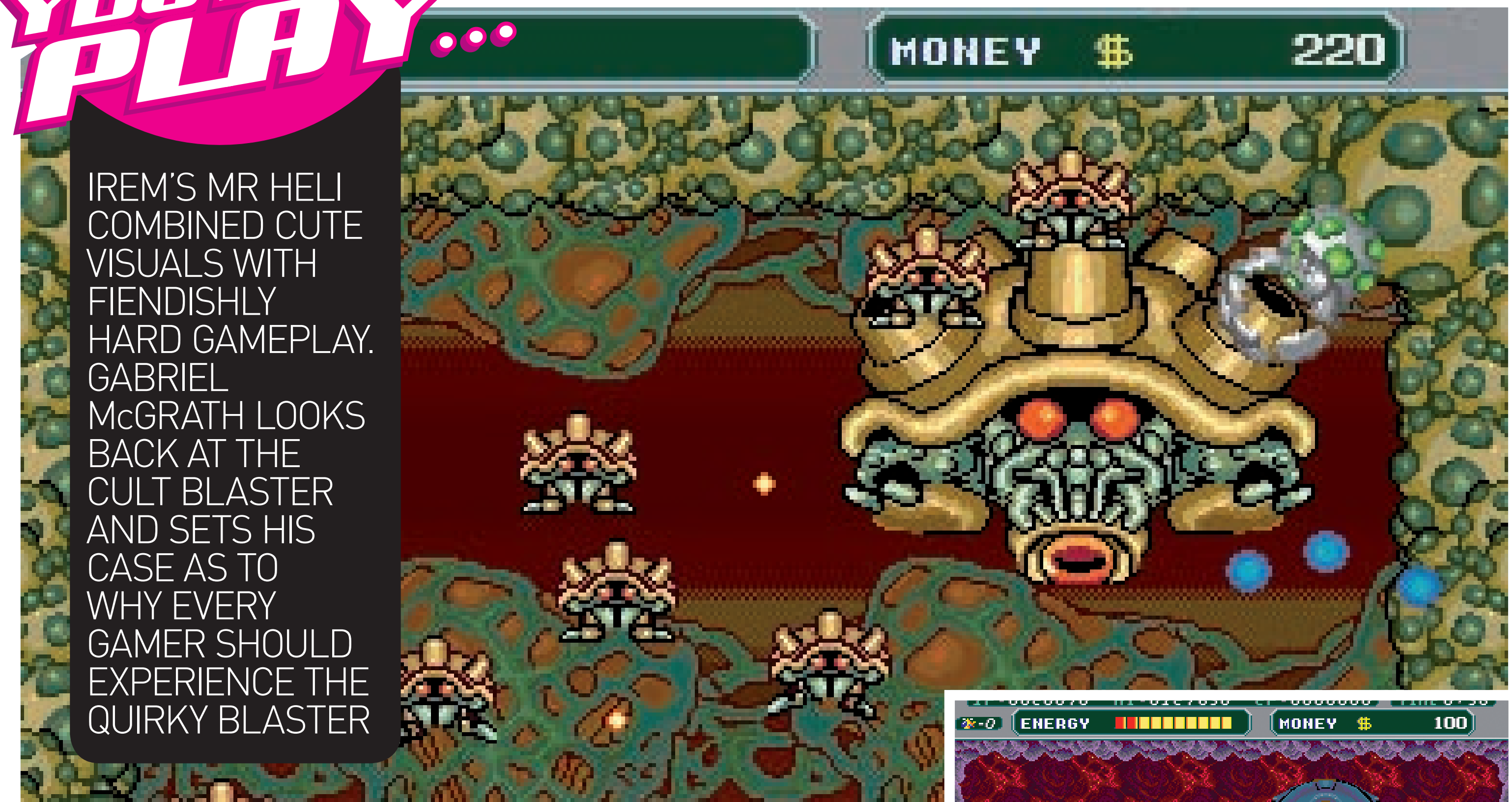
"*Super Pipeline II* came out in late 1985 and we didn't survive past January 1986," says Paul. "On the day we were liquidated, it was my 21st birthday, so we all came down here to The Star. My dog died two days later. Not a good week."

We raise our glasses and drink to forget the sad end but remember those wonderful Taskset games. I ask if Mr Walker Senior was aware that he inspired their proudest moment, but Andy shakes his head. "No, he died ten years ago and he never knew." He drains his pint and smiles. "But you know, the pipe did hold. The fix is probably still in!"

Special thanks to Andrew 'Merman' Fisher for the screenshots and to Andy's son, Paul Walker, for not only providing the studio quality photos but for playtesting the Super Pipeline games as a kid to prove both were possible to complete.

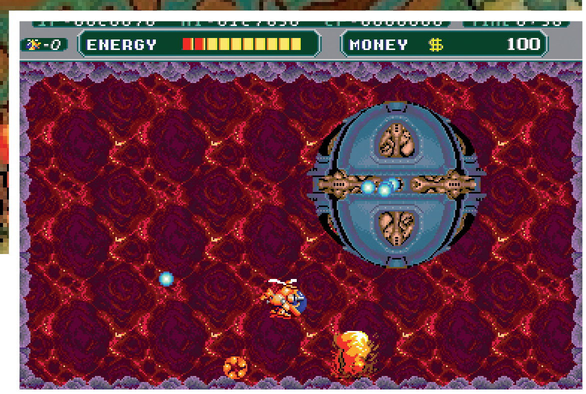
MR HELI

IREM'S MR HELI COMBINED CUTE VISUALS WITH FIENDISHLY HARD GAMEPLAY. GABRIEL McGRATH LOOKS BACK AT THE CULT BLASTER AND SETS HIS CASE AS TO WHY EVERY GAMER SHOULD EXPERIENCE THE QUIRKY BLASTER





» *Mr Heli* rejected the common design constraints concerning scrolling in arcade games.



» Mr Heli may feature some outlandish looking bosses, but don't let their comic appearance put you off. These guys are evil, and require an insane amount of firepower before expiring.

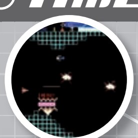
Irem's other 1987 release has been neglected. No sequel. No ticker-tape parade. Just cameo appearances in *R-Type Final* and *Shuyaku Sentai Irem Fighter* (a Japanese card fighter on Game Boy). Yet this 'other' game deserves better. Now, as we near his 21st birthday, it's time to show Mr Heli some appreciation.

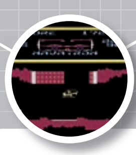
Mad scientist 'The Muddy' has taken over the planet. The job of overthrowing this evil genius falls to Mr Heli, a fat helicopter with legs. He's a member of gaming's Big Sprite Club. Thankfully, he's quite manoeuvrable, using a standard eight-way joystick. Fire Button 1 shoots bullets in your current horizontal direction. Fire Button 2 has dual roles. When flying, it releases homing missiles. When standing on the ground, bombs are dropped instead.

Each level contains a variety of flying enemies, all intent on wearing down Mr Heli's health bar. Also present are destructible blocks, some containing blue crystals used to buy weapon upgrades and health. Crystals often hang from the 'roof' of a level, and this is where things get interesting. If a large crystal falls to the ground, it shatters into smaller, less-valuable crystals. (Can I swoop down to catch that large crystal but avoid those enemies and bullets?) It's a neat risk/reward system.

Arcade machines usually offer predictability in level mechanics. Play *Xevious* and the screen will keep scrolling from top to bottom. Play *Rastan* and the screen will stay still until you move your character. Such stylistic restraints were gleefully ignored by the maker of *Mr Heli*.

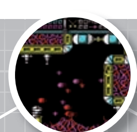
TIMELINE

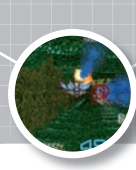




VANGUARD
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1981

FORT APOCALYPSE
Version Featured: Commodore 64
Year Released: 1982

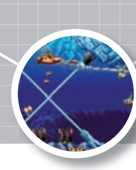




CYBERNOID
Version Featured: Spectrum
Year Released: 1987

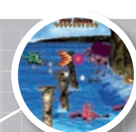
GALAXY FORCE 2
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1989





BLOOD MONEY
Version Featured: Amiga
Year Released: 1989

IN THE HUNT
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1995



PREHISTORIC ISLE 2
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1999

THE CONVERSIONS

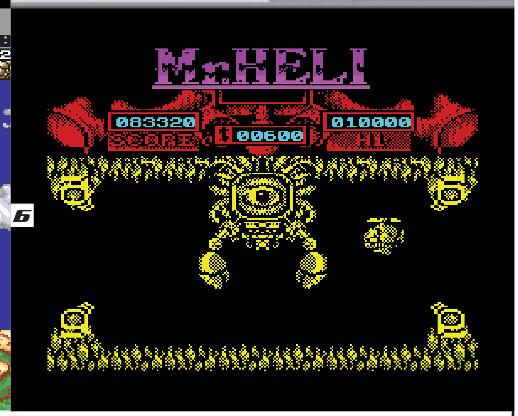
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1. AMIGA
The Amiga version offers jerky gameplay, a cramped play area, and inaccurate level designs. The music has been poorly remixed. Strangely, weapon shops no longer indicate an item's availability. And your extra-large health bar will be quickly worn down by respawning enemies. *Amiga Format* gave it 52%.

2. AMSTRAD CPC
More playable than the 16-bits, but frustrating. Destructible blocks only explode in groups of four. There's a big delay when you collect crystals or buy weapons. Enemies keep respawning. And shops still don't show whether they're available or not. Yet it improves on C64's audio, with simultaneous music and SFX.

3. ATARI ST
Remarkably similar to the jerky gameplay and cramped play area of the Amiga version. Like all conversions here (except PC-Engine) the Gold and Spy helis are present but don't actually perform their expected functions. The *Games Machine* awarded this 65%, showing either generosity or a failure in basic maths.

4. COMMODORE 64
The C64 version shares the same problems as the other 8-bits (respawning enemies, no shop availability indication) but fixes the delay in grabbing weapons. It's smooth and playable, with a bonus *Armalyte*-esque title screen. Choose between music or very good sound effects.

5. PC-ENGINE
Wow. This conversion is so far ahead of the rest, it's about to lap them. Graphics vary from arcade perfect to 'better than the arcade' (Level 2's parallax rockwalls are particularly superb). The original's catchy music sounds brilliant in stereo. But be warned: Level 2's boss is a total %$*@!

6. ZX SPECTRUM
Take out the Amstrad's colours (it's monochrome) and music (sound effects only) and you have the Spectrum version. Some enemies require more missiles to kill, but each life now begins with a generous five-second shield. All the Amstrad port's sins are replicated – maddening delays, constant evil respawning…

The first part of each level uses horizontal push-scrolling. A reasonable time limit means you can take out enemies, collect crystals and buy power-ups in your own time. But then the screen will suddenly start scrolling vertically – and 'shopping' is abandoned in favour of simply surviving. It's an adrenaline-pumping dash, ending with a mini-boss fight. *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* had a few levels in this style. But *Mr Heli* has more surprises in store.

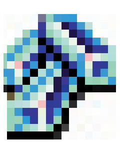
The fourth section in each level is an empty pitch-black maze. You have to shoot the walls in order to glimpse them, find the exit and turn the lights back on. The maze then reverts to pushscrolling, and you encounter enemies who can drill through rock. It's a little bit *Mr Do!,* as you coax and destroy drillers without dying yourself. The level finally climaxes, with a single-screen boss battle.

That's a lot of work for each level, and the difficulty's high. Unfortunately, a lack of restart points means some sections demand near-perfection from the player. If you make it to Level 3: Section 2, you'll hear music very similar to Data East's *Robocop* theme – maybe because cyborg-like reflexes are needed to get that far. And yet, you will persevere. "This time I'll get that extra crystal… This time, I'll last long enough to get that extra weapon upgrade." The happy music and graphics really get you in.

Unfortunately, your chances of locating *Mr Heli* in an arcade are close to zero. If you own an arcade cab or Supergun, the most recent *Mr Heli* PCB eBay sale ended at a tempting £36 / US$67. Otherwise, you can experience *Mr Heli* via MAME, or one of the home conversions. Incidentally, the PC-Engine version is by far the best.

Irem is an acronym. Innovations in Recreational Electronic Media. And *Mr Heli* is one of the company's finest examples.

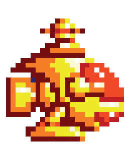
THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR



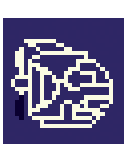
CRYSTALS
Your in-game currency. Larger crystals are worth more, unless you allow them to fall and shatter into smaller pieces.



WEAPON MACHINE
These are 'greyed out' until you can afford the item in question. Then just touch it to complete your purchase.



GOLD HELI
This rare enemy is like a mobile bank. Shoot it rapidly and it will emit a stream of money crystals.



INVISIBLE HELI
Perhaps inspired by *Wonderwoman*'s invisible jet, these buggers try to ram you, lowering your firepower by one level.

TRY THIS NEXT

CYBERNOID
Ready for another difficult journey through colourful caverns? *Cybernoid* is the game for you. *Mr Heli*'s smooth scrolling is replaced by *Cybernoid*'s 'flickscreen' scrolling. The latter offers more weapons (chosen using keyboard number keys) and sections requiring pixel-perfect timing. One of *Cybernoid*'s other gameplay features is the use of *Rick Dangerous*-style traps. Sure these traps aren't invisible, but they still offer opportunities for sudden death, so trap locations must be memorised. Whether this is seen as a 'challenge' or 'frustration' is up to you. Hewson's classic is easy to find, appearing on all major 8-bit and 16-bit home computers, plus NES.



THE MAKING OF…

RAMPAGE



WHEN THE CITY-PUMMELLING RAMPAGE HIT ARCADES IN 1986 IT PROVED AN ENORMOUS HIT – PROOF POSITIVE THAT GAMERS, YOUNG OR OLD, JUST LOVE TO SMASH THINGS UP. MIKE BEVAN SPEAKS TO BRIAN COLIN, CREATOR OF THE TUMULTUOUS TRIO – GEORGE, LIZZIE AND RALPH





» A beaming Brian Colin (right) smiles for the cameras.



» [*Rampage: World Tour*] Jumping onto this aircraft turns the game into a horizontal shooter for a few seconds.



» Artwork for Activision's *Rampage* home conversions.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** BALLY/MIDWAY
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **CONVERSION PLATFORMS:** C64, ATARI 8-BIT, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, AMIGA, ATARI ST, PC DOS, NES, MASTER SYSTEM, APPLE II, ATARI 2600
- » **GENRE:** SMASH-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £250+ (DEDICATED CABINET)
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ARCH RIVALS (1989), PIGSKIN 621 AD (1990), RAMPAGE: WORLD TOUR (1997)

Destroy! Eat! Slap your fellow monsters around for kicks! The core ingredients of Bally/Midway's hugely popular monster mash-up – the jokey B-movie-inspired setting and madcap three-player demolition of North America – certainly gave *Rampage* a unique, near-universal appeal among arcade releases of its era. With eye-catching cabinet artwork and impressive cartoon-style graphics, the game was a magnet for hungry players, often accompanied by crowds of onlookers waiting to buy into a slice of the animated carnage. *Rampage*'s bold concept and slick visual appeal were the product of Midway graphic artist and animator Brian Colin, who, despite a shaky initial reception and a certain level of management resistance, worked tirelessly to get the game commissioned and into arcades.

With initial leanings to becoming a film animator (before discovering just how "mind-numbingly tedious" an entry-level job in the industry might be), Brian spent a couple of years after leaving college as a freelance cartoonist, providing material for local newspapers and advertising agencies. In July 1982, he answered an advert for an animator position at arcade manufacturer Bally/Midway. Adapting his line-drawn cartoon style to the company's 16-colour, 32 by 32 sprite-based hardware proved challenging at first, but Brian's distinctive pixel artwork could soon be seen in a number of hit games – his first project being *Discs Of Tron*, followed by the classic *SpyHunter*. Brian, however, was itching for a project that would allow him to evolve his art style – perhaps something with larger, multi-sprite characters, with which he'd be able to add a little more emotional expression. The answer, it would soon be apparent, to the desire for larger on-screen characters would be the creation of a hundred-foot gorilla called George.

Rampage itself began life as an experimental graphical work-around for Midway's proprietary MCR arcade hardware. Returning from a trade show, Brian had been discussing the system's technical limitations, compared to other manufacturer's boards, with colleagues Sharon Perry and Jim Belt. Midway's underpowered arcade system didn't support hardware scrolling or scaling, or animated backgrounds. "About the only thing we could do was swap limited rows of large rectangular blocks," he explains. "It occurred to us that unless we wanted to do a game in which rectangles collapsed upon themselves, any kind of background animation was out of the question. No sooner had the words been uttered, I realised that if we used foreground and sprite 'cloud' elements to cover the vanishing background blocks, it would be possible to do a game featuring Kong-sized characters smashing buildings into dust." After bouncing the concept off programmers Jeff Nauman and Mike Bartlow, who both agreed the idea was a promising one, Brian knuckled down to make monsters.

"I immediately started drafting a design document, creating a large ape-like character, and provided Jeff with some modified background building blocks to experiment with," he remembers. "Players discover the biggest, meanest, baddest

CONVERSION CAPERS



AMSTRAD CPC A colourful and surprisingly enjoyable version, with decent renditions of all three monsters, good playability and control (leaping between and on to structures is not too hard), and some nice collapsing buildings. Loses points for lack of bonus pickups appearing in the windows, meaning your only source of nourishment is the two-legged kind, and the repetitive music drove us mad.



SPECTRUM Despite some eye-wrangling colour clash, the Speccy conversion is one of the best of Activision's 8-bit ports. The monochrome monsters are well drawn and have similar character to the arcade game, and buildings crumble and collapse very pleasingly. Bonus 'food' is readily available, and the only negative was that you can't punch away from your monster when climbing buildings.



COMMODORE 64 The C64 received two separate ports by Activision in Europe and the US, but the UK effort is rather disappointing, with unattractive graphics and awkward controls that make building bashing a real chore. The US version (pictured above) is much better, and feels more like the arcade game, despite the slightly odd appearance of the player characters (Lizzie looks particularly emaciated).



ATARI 400/800 Oh dear. Where do we start? Dull graphics and ugly 'expando'-monster sprites, the inability to jump onto buildings or even climb them unless you are in the exact position stipulated by the programmers, and a horrible bug that places you halfway up a wall as soon as you do manage to start climbing all add up to the worst 8-bit port we've played. We really want to stop talking about it now.



ATARI LYNX Although not a particularly authentic port, we're rather fond of this Lynx outing. Dispensing with the single-screen format in favour of scrolling levels was a good idea given the small size of the screen, and the graphics are very pretty, with well-drawn incarnations of George and pals. There's even a new monster – a giant mouse that reminds us of that baby kangaroo from the Sylvester cartoons.



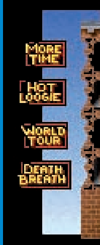
AMIGA/ATARI ST Despite minor cosmetic graphical changes (the monsters look like they've been slightly mangled in the wash), these are pretty authentic conversions which retain the majority of the features from the arcade. There's proper, progressive building damage and satisfying structural collapses, and the crunching sound effects of the Amiga version are better than those of the original game.



NES Data East's heavily 'Nintendo-ised' version of *Rampage* (George looks more like Donkey Kong here) is still fun, but couldn't claim to be particularly faithful to its arcade parent. The colour palette is completely different, relying on an overabundance of green and blue, and Ralph has been removed altogether. It plays pretty well, but the lack of any ability to jump onto or between buildings is a bad omission.



MASTER SYSTEM With the largest and most authentic representations of George, Lizzie and Ralph, this is a very fine version indeed. Although the city backgrounds are less true to their arcade counterpart than the Amiga or ST ports, they still look great, and are crammed with all the little details found in the original. More importantly, control is spot-on, allowing you to bound between buildings effortlessly.





dudes they've ever seen in an arcade game… and they control 'em!" stated Brian's original design proposal. "I felt that the key was the punch," he continues. "If it looked and animated okay, the game would work. George came out great, so we presented it to our immediate bosses, and they responded with an emphatic: 'No way'."

Midway's middle management were, it seemed, unwilling to back a project that was "too offbeat to take a chance on", but Brian was undeterred by this early negativity. "I went directly to the new corporate president, Maury Ferchen, and he loved the idea," he says. "More importantly, he loved that it was so different from everything else out there." The key to the game's uniqueness was the trio of playable characters, three unfortunate humans, George, Lizzie and Ralph, who had been accidentally mutated into rampaging movie-style monsters. The opportunity to give players the chance to be a 'baddie' was a simple, but as yet untried piece of videogame role reversal.

"Actually, I saw the monsters as victims," explains Brian, "not unlike Lon Chaney or Boris Karloff in the classic Thirties Universal monster films. The environmentally irresponsible Scumlabs Corporation was the true villain of the story. Their industrial pollution caused the initial mutation, and the monsters were simply lashing out at the overly industrialised world that made such an accident possible in the first place! But with that rationale firmly in place… yeah, we absolutely loved letting the player be the 'bad guy' for a change. Playing the villain is always much more fun than playing a hero."



Each of the playable monsters, a giant ape, lizard and wolf, were created using four sprite blocks – three for the head and body and one for the punching arm. "Ape and lizard were a no-brainer," admits Brian (the obvious influences being King Kong and Godzilla), "but for Ralph we wanted something that was clearly not just a colour change, so the longer snout and pointed ears of the canine seemed right. The names suggested themselves: George looked like a 'George' (from the film *Of Mice And Men*), 'Lizzie' gave us a passable pun and a female character, and what else would a wolf call himself but 'Ralph'?

"The preliminary experiments paid off and the level of excitement and creativity was high," remembers Brian. "The introduction of the third player was something we wanted from the beginning, reasoning that if three players could enjoy a game, in the same space at the same time, the potential earnings would be greater." If the game was to be as successful as hoped, new players would be joining continuously, so it made sense to put a huge roster of cities into the game to devastate. The Midwestern town of Peoria was slated first for destruction, inspired by the Middle-American values it represented, as made famous by the phrase, 'But will it play in Peoria?' The final tally extended to 85 US (and Canadian) towns and cities – from Albuquerque to Tuscaloosa – each revisited several times to make up the 768 'days' portrayed by the game's single-screen levels.

In the spirit of traditionally cheesy monster movies, each cityscape was packed with an assortment of interactive

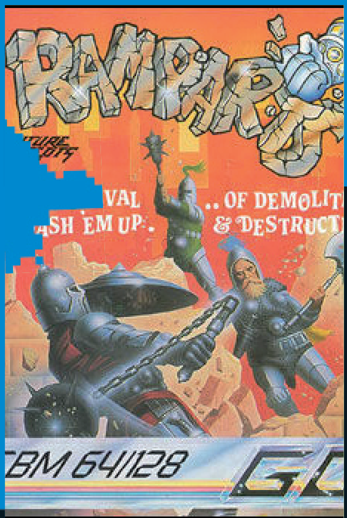




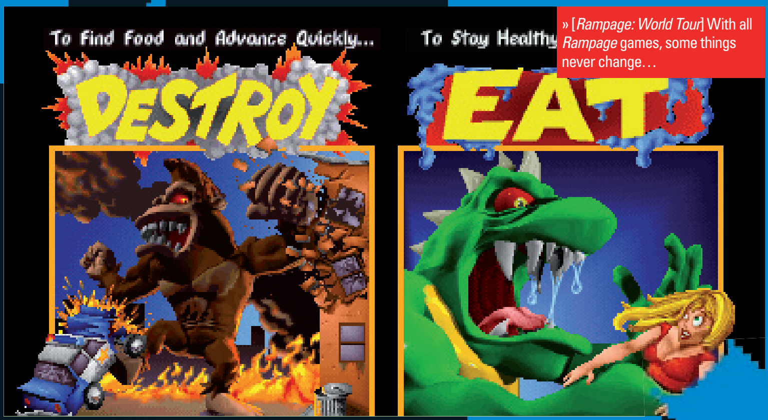
» The *Rampage: World Tour* arcade machine at Game Refuge's offices.

RAMPARTS RIPOFF!

Not to be confused with Atari's brilliant arcade-strategy game *Rampart* (a big favourite here at Retro Gamer), this medieval *Rampage* clone casts players in the role of two giant-sized knights attacking a number of badly-drawn castles. Or it could be a couple of normal-sized knights smashing up some miniature castles in Lilliput, we're not really sure. Along the way clichéd fantasy hazards such as dragons and witches on broomsticks try to stop you. Castles, being a lot stronger than skyscrapers, seem to take much more pummelling to topple, and to be honest after a while we got bored, gave up, and waited for the invention of the trebuchet.







» [*Rampage: World Tour*] With all *Rampage* games, some things never change…

elements – skyscrapers to raze, soldiers and police taking pot shots, hostile tanks and helicopters, and dozens of tiny fleeing civilians – a nourishing source of protein for the mutant trio. Further 'food' could be found by punching out windows, revealing a range of items of varying levels of usefulness – fruit, roast turkeys, cacti, electric toasters and toilets (often complete with unfortunate occupant). Each creature could choose to 'rescue' a particular individual on each level, George could pick up women (so to speak), Lizzie could grab a designated male victim and Ralph could hold businessmen. Doing so stopped the army firing at the player's monster for a short while before the victim escaped, at which point you were usually tempted to eat them anyway – just for fun.

Of course, even though this indiscriminate co-operative destruction was most entertaining, it turned out to be just as pleasurable to beat up fellow monsters, or discover amusing mini-games to play with your hairy or scaly chums. "One thing we wanted to do with the game was not dictate to people how they should play it," says Brian. "So people played it every way imaginable – co-operatively, competitively, or a bit of both – and some folks even came up with their own game-within-a-game inventions (like Ping-Pong with the elevated trains). To this day, I still feel the best games are the ones in which there is no wrong way to play them."

As the project approached completion the team crossed paths with management's newly self-appointed 'design evaluator', whose overzealous nit-pickery was notorious – "anything that was different than *Ms Pac-Man* was considered a design flaw," snorts Brian. In the case of *Rampage*, it was the so-called 'in-game nudity' that came under fire, after the monsters transform back into tiny humans and scuttle off screen cupping their pixelated bits and bobs. Conversely, the act of shoving hundreds of tiny people into the mouths of a trio of ravenous monsters seemed to go un-commented upon. "Oddly enough, it was the eating of the other players (after they turned human again) that generated the most surprise and negative commentary. Apparently it was okay to eat strangers, but not okay to eat fellow players. The cannibalism and nudity were 'issues' for a while, and a few letters and comments were relayed to us, but I don't think anyone really took it seriously."

Brian, not content with creating the concept, characters and in-game visuals, was responsible for all the cabinet and marquee art, as well as the game's iconic logo. "It was my first foray into that side of things," he admits. "Prior to *Rampage*, I'd give sketches to the pinball/cabinet art department, and they'd develop something more or less independently. But after seeing my sketches for the game, art dept manager Greg Freres encouraged me to create the whole package, which gave me an excuse to dust off my pens and drawing board.

"The control panel depicted giant footprints on a grassy knoll, the monitor glass featured frightened folks running away from the screen, and I attempted to make it appear as if the on-screen action was happening off in the distance. The marquee faces gave me a chance to give the trio even more character,

THE MAKING OF... RAMPAGE





BIGGER, FASTER, MORE POWERFUL

For *World Tour* our favourite monsters developed improved city-bashing abilities and more solid, 'Claymation' stylings. It was Brian's first experience of testing the new wave of pre-rendered 3D art packages. "I was leery of most 3D CAD-type programs I'd seen to that point," admits Brian, "since they seemed to lack a roundness which I felt was essential to a strong cartoon look, so we developed the characters using Martin Hash's Animation Master; a spline-based modelling tool that gave us the look we wanted. Our initial tests proved so successful that we quickly expanded the cast and cinematic backstory to give us more opportunities to stretch our new-found 'cartoony' modelling muscles.

"A couple of the original Game Refuge character animators who cut their teeth on *World Tour*, Aaron Hartline and Rob Dollase, have lately taken their talents to the big screen. Aaron's latest character triumph is the evil buzzard in *Horton Hears A Who*."







» Brian's pen-and-ink designs for the two original monsters, George and Lizzie.

and the clenched fists were all mine. Although the fact that I misspelled 'renown' is a source of continual amusement to my buddy Jeff Nauman," he quips.

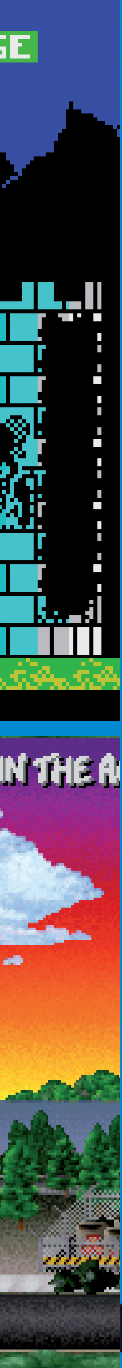
"Everyone who saw or played the game was amused by it and agreed it was unique," confirms Brian, "but not everyone necessarily understood what we were going for. One sales VP who liked the look of the game, but wasn't convinced anyone would play it, said, 'If this game makes any money at all, I'll sell 5,000 units without even opening my Rolodex.' We suggested a possible press release idea to a marketing VP who, unfortunately, didn't feel the game was strong enough to warrant its own marketing strategy. So instead, I took it upon myself to write, print and mail hundreds of press releases to the major newspapers in all of the US cities destroyed in the game, resulting in hundreds of wonderful articles and thousands of dollars worth of free press."

To the surprise of those who had dismissed *Rampage* as a mere novelty, arcade trial locations reported record-breaking interest. "The game went on to break all previous weekly earnings records," states Brian proudly. "One test location asked that the game be removed because of the constant crowds around the game [who deposited 20,000 quarters within five days]. The addition of a third-player spot was a factor, of course, but operators observed that the game had a broader audience appeal than most other games of the period. The game appealed to girls and adults and younger children as well, not just 14-year-old males! Moreover, the game had 'legs' – continued earning power over time."

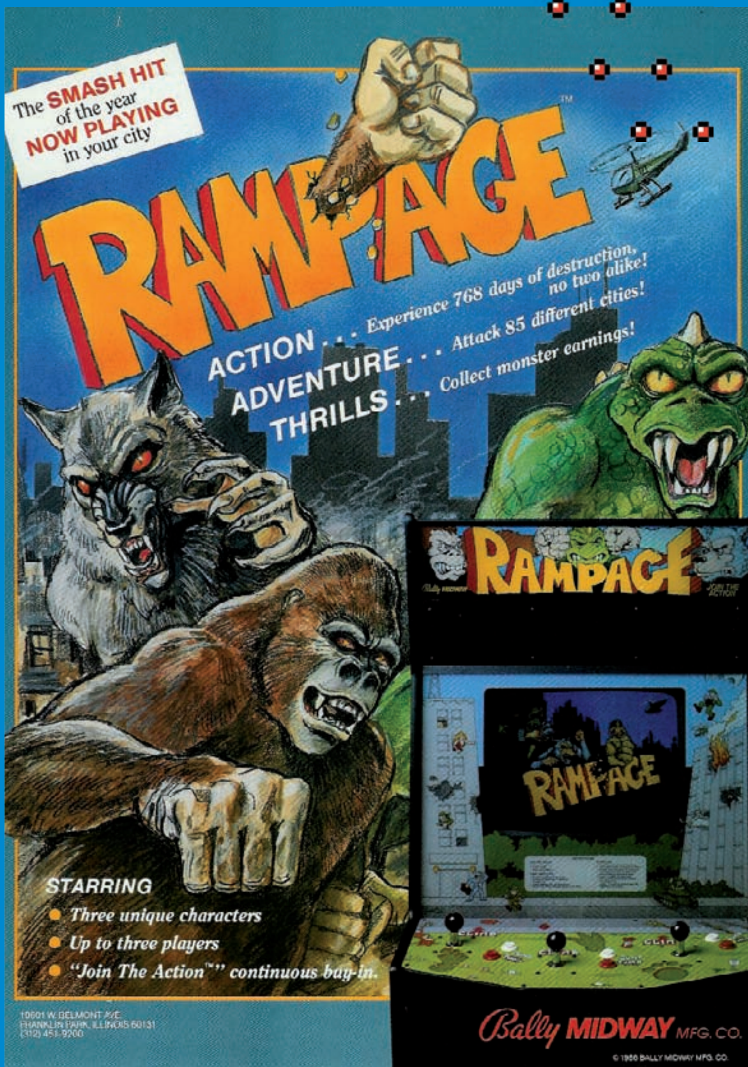
Quite an achievement then, and we can only hope those initial detractors ended up supping on a generous helping of humble pie. After creating such a universally popular coin-op, Midway kept a close working relationship with Brian and Jeff, even after the pair left to set up their own company, Game Refuge, in 1992. "We continued to stay in touch with our old friends and colleagues," says Brian. "In particular, Midway VP Ken Fedesna never missed an opportunity to ask us when we were planning to 'come back home'. A couple of years later, we were in a meeting with Midway upper management discussing the particulars for a multi-character-melee fighting game we were developing for them at the time, when their head of sales mused that what they really needed was a game that appealed to all audiences. Jeff and I glanced at each other briefly, and blurted out in unison, '*Rampage*. Let's redo *Rampage*!' The green light was given to the project in under an hour."

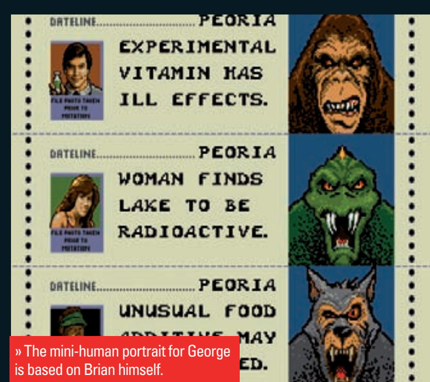
The resulting sequel, *Rampage: World Tour*, hit arcades in 1997, just over a decade after its successful predecessor. Essentially a remake of the original on a grand scale, all three monsters returned to re-pulverise North America, taking in side-missions across the globe to destroy various tourist-trap cities, and monuments such as Big Ben. The addition of a 'kick' button allowed the use of a second, even more powerfully destructive appendage, and levels were larger-scale multi-screen scrolling affairs. An all-new and decidedly purple 'hidden' monster also cropped up from time to time. "*World Tour* started out as a four-player game," explains Brian, "but it was later decided to drop the newcomer in favour of a smaller cabinet footprint. The model was already done, however, and it seemed a shame to waste it. Therefore we decided that

> "For lovers of the ridiculous, Rampage is a must. Easily the funniest and one of the most playable arcade games I've ever seen" Clare Edgeley , C&VG November 1986









» The mini-human portrait for George is based on Brian himself.

increased exposure to toxic ooze would precipitate a secondary mutation of the player characters into VERN – the Violent Enraged Radioactive Nemesis. I had a lot of fun expanding the backstory, which centred on Scumlabs Corporation and its corrupt CEO, Eustas DeMonic."

World Tour was a perfect opportunity to add more long-term appeal to the *Rampage* concept, with new moves and features such as using buildings as trampolines, jumping onto aircraft, and picking up special powers – like the hilarious 'Death Breath'. "The game had lots of room for detail and hidden content," agrees Brian, "so there was a great deal of stuff we couldn't get into the original that found its way into this one. Better still, having a common reference in the original meant that the entire team could play an even greater role in creating that content, since everyone was clear on what needed to be done." **Retro Gamer** mentions the surprise inclusion of a cosy English seaside resort as the globetrotting carnage reaches Britain, with London, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Dublin being the more recognised targets. "How could I pass up Torquay?" Brian grins. "I'm a long-time *Fawlty Towers* fan…"

Unfortunately the game marked the point where Brian and Jeff bowed out of the *Rampage* saga. Although Midway approached Game Refuge to consider producing a third game, for the home market, Brian's proposal of a "really cool, dramatically different, cutting-edge 3D *Rampage*" was turned down, with the astonishing response that the company wasn't looking for 'anything that ambitious'. "The thought of doing the same game with minimal changes didn't really have much appeal for us, so we took a pass," admits Brian. "As for the sequels that were produced, I've never actually played them but a number of folks have told me that they don't really bring anything new to the table."

Happily, the arcade monster-matinees he created with programmer Jeff Nauman remain a source of fond satisfaction. His basement coin-op collection contains both machines, and another pair of cabinets takes pride of place in the reception lobby at Game Refuge. "Designing and developing these games was a wonderful experience," declares Brian, "and I think they're a great example of how the fun you have creating a game shows through to the end result." But he freely admits that working on the *Rampage* games provided a valuable lesson about creating 'concept' titles that couldn't be neatly classified by any particular gaming category or genre. "The games broke records, were enormously popular and did quite well," he acknowledges, "but there was always a bit more 'market resistance' than one might think."

As a parting gesture **Retro Gamer** cheekily asks if Brian has a personal favourite of his three monstrous creations from *Rampage*. The reply is admirably diplomatic. "George was the first character I created and as such, still my favourite", he admits fondly, before hastily adding, "Although, since my lovely wife Rae was kind enough to let me use her likeness for the human head shot of Lizzie, perhaps it would be best I said that she was my fave, in human form, at any rate."



RAMPAGE WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

Game Refuge declined involvement in Midway's post-*World Tour* console sequels, so the task of creating them fell to Avalanche Software. The resulting products, *Rampage 2: Universal Tour* (PSone, N64, GBC) and *Rampage Through Time* (PSone) were essentially revamped versions of *World Tour*, using the same game engine. *Universal Tour* introduces three new monsters (Curtis the Rat, Boris the Rhino and Ruby the Lobster), and gives you the task of rescuing George, Lizzie and Ralph, who are being held on three separate continents. *Through Time* does what it says on the tin, and has you smashing through various eras of civilisation (medieval skyscrapers ahoy) with a larger roster of monster characters, including the originals, and a variety of bonus mini-games. Both are enjoyable enough but don't really add anything new to the *Rampage* formula, and the same can be said for the recent *Rampage: Total Destruction* (PS2, GameCube, Wii), which despite sporting a new 3D game engine, uses the same side-on view as the older titles. Finally, we ought to mention *Rampage: Puzzle Attack*, a *Tetris Attack*-like spin-off for the Game Boy Advance, which just happens to be the first console game ever developed in Finland…



Thanks to Game Refuge (www.gamerefuge.com) and Brian Colin. Check out Brian's latest game at www.arcticstud.com. No animals were harmed during the creation of this article.



X-MEN

KONAMI'S ULTIMATE SIX-PLAYER COIN SLAYER



- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £50 PCB BOARD



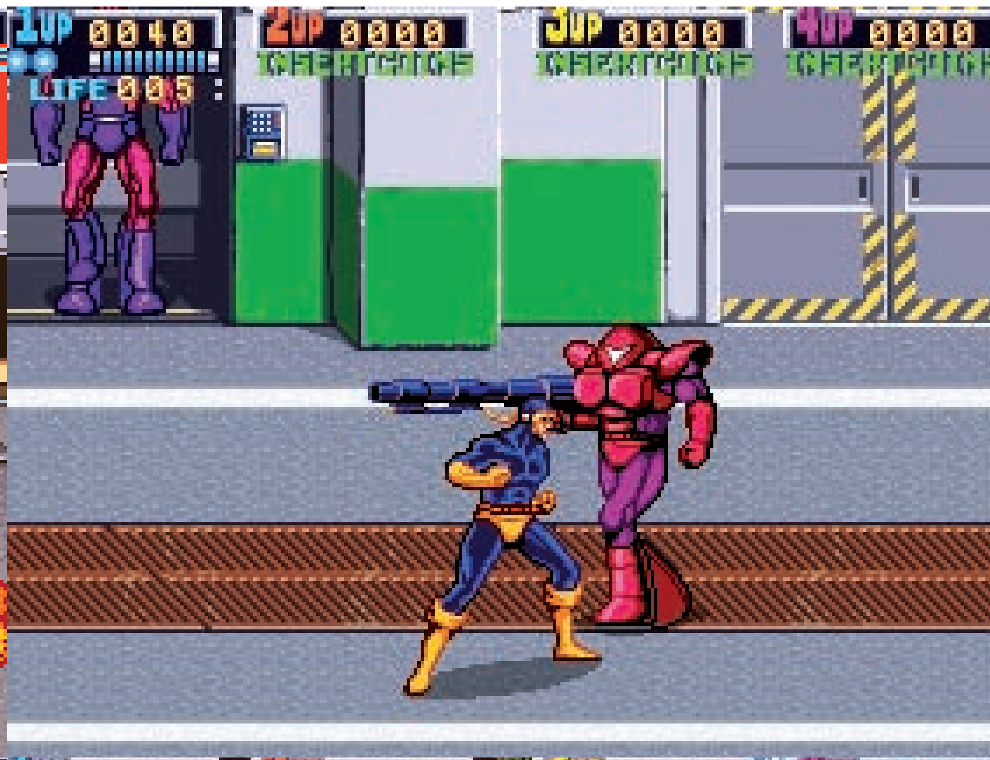
HISTORY

I discovered Konami's *X-Men* cab during a sodden week at a Pontin's holiday park in Pakefield. Upon arriving at our chalet, I hastily unpacked and headed straight to the arcade with a small percentage of my dad's wages in tow. It was there that I clamped eyes on *NBA Jam*, Taito's *Superman* arcade game, *Space Gun*, *Power Drift*, and this little gem, which I instantly mistook for a giant kid magnet.

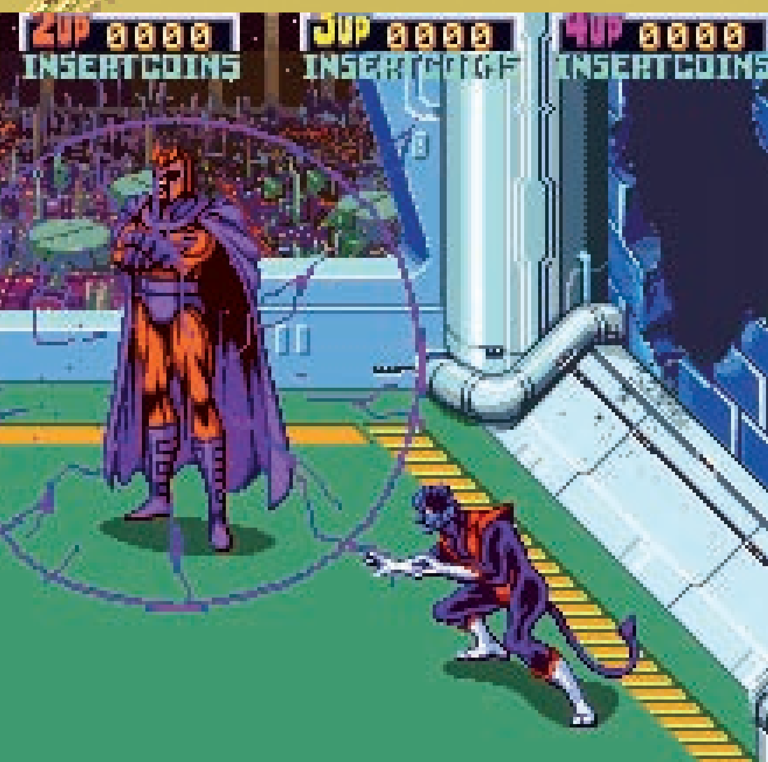
Changing up the £5 note I'd secured from my dad, I sauntered over to the arcade machine in the hope of muscling into a good spot to see what all the fuss was about. I was blown away. Konami's sublime side-scrolling *X-Men* brawler, although quite limited – there was one attack button and special attack that drains a few bars off your health – was a gorgeous-looking arcade game that stayed faithful to Marvel's superhero team.

Popping my 50p in the hole, I selected Wolverine – my then-favourite member of the X-Men – and quickly proceeded to hack chunks out of an army of lilac Sentinels. Then something remarkable happened: a guy, about my age and of similar height, jumped onto the machine to try and help me out. We didn't say two words to each other, I was too engrossed with the game, but we both knew the score. Then, a little later, another chap, slightly older (I remember because, unlike me, he wasn't dressed like a mental person) put some money in the machine and selected Nightcrawler. I later learned that *X-Men's* teleporting cat is the best character to use in the game.

We managed to get a reasonable way into the game – up to the Master Mold boss fight – before running out of cash. But once our session was over we got chatting, recounting the games we liked and the machines we owned and basically became good friends… for that week. Only now can I can appreciate and understand the social barrier-breaking power that games have, and for me no other arcade game sums that up better than *X-Men*. I miss those days.


2UP 0000
INSERT COINS
3UP 0000
INSERT COINS
4UP 0000

1UP 0040
LIFE 005
2UP 0000
3UP 0000
4UP 0000

2UP 0000
INSERT COINS
3UP 0000
INSERT COINS
4UP 0000
INSERT COINS

1UP 0181
LIFE 005
2UP 0000
INSERT COINS
3UP 0000
4UP 0000

2UP 0000
INSERT COINS
3UP 0000
4UP 0000
INSERT COINS

1UP 0254
LIFE 014
2UP 0000
INSERT COINS
3UP 0000
INSERT COINS
4UP 0000
INSERT COINS


MONTY ON THE RUN
C16 Plus 4
£6.95
Strip Poker
SPORE
commodore
16



COMMODORE 16

AFTER THE INDUSTRY CRASH OF 1983, COMMODORE WAS BUOYANT THANKS TO THE PROFITABLE COMMODORE 64. ANDREW FISHER LOOKS BACK AT WHAT CAME NEXT – THE UNDERRATED AND NEGLECTED COMMODORE 16

Year released: 1984

Original price: US $99 / £129.99 for the starter pack

Buy it now for: £15-£40 (eBay.co.uk)

Associated magazines: Big K

Why the C16 was great… Often referred to as the C64's 'baby brother', the C16 was a good entry-level machine in the mid-Eighties. An enhanced BASIC with built-in commands for graphics and sound made programming easier. With two-channel sound and a palette of over 100 colours, several well-known programmers worked wonders with the machine.



» The American box with 'The Learning Machine' tagline and a BASIC tutorial cartridge.

With over $1 billion in hardware sales in 1983, Commodore was bringing "computers to the masses", just as its president Jack Tramiel wanted. His next aim was an 8-bit computer that would sell for less than $100 to beat the company he saw as his main rival – Sinclair. A trip to Europe to see how the Commodore 64 was faring convinced Tramiel there would be a huge market for such a low-cost machine. To keep production costs down, Tramiel wanted the machine to have just nine main chips. Central to this was the 7501 processor, an updated and faster version of the 6510 that had powered the C64. In a similar fashion to the VIC-20, the graphic and sound functions were combined in the new TED chip, or Text Editing Device. With the deadline of the Winter CES (Consumer Electronics Show) looming, it looked like the MOS Technologies design team had cracked the nine-chip limit. However, Commodore newcomer Bil Herd spotted that the reset switch added to the machine would not work properly without an additional chip and it was added.

The graphic resolution possible with TED matched the Commodore 64 at 320x200 pixels, but the addition of the luminance control gave it a much larger palette of 121 colours. Sound was two channel only, and with less waveforms than the highly regarded SID chip in the C64. At the Winter CES show in early 1984, reaction was mixed to the 264 range of machines shown – the 116 with 16K of memory, the 264 with 64K, and the V364 with its built-in speech synthesizer. (The proposed numbering system was oddly reminiscent of the Amstrad range that was to be launched later that same year). There were concerns about the lack of hardware sprites – a feature that made games programming easier on the C64 – and the lack of backward compatibility. Users would have to buy new peripherals (from Commodore) – the connectors were different, requiring a new Datasette (tape player) and joysticks.

The repercussions of the poor reactions did not have a lot of time to sink in. Just days later Jack Tramiel left Commodore, and would take control of rivals Atari. With Jack Tramiel's firm hand on the rudder now gone, marketing began to dominate the planning of the new range and things went off course. The 116 with its rubber keys was effectively dumped, seeing only limited sales in Europe. The 364 and its Magic Voice (often referred to as the 'Tragic Voice' by Commodore employees) was scrapped. Wanting to emphasise its business potential, a set of

INSTANT EXPERT

The TED (Text Editing Device) chip had the same graphic resolution and modes as the Commodore 64's VIC-II chip, including a multicolour mode that reduced horizontal resolution by half.

C64 and VIC tape formats were incompatible with the C16, and an adapter was needed to use the older model of Datasette.

The C16 had no user port and lacked the Plus/4's built-in UART chip, so it could not use a modem.

Commodore ditched the Atari nine-pin connector for joysticks, and introduced its own eight-pin connector.

Commodore manufactured printers, monitors, joysticks and Datasettes in the dark grey colour of the C16 and Plus/4 range.

The C16 included a six-pin serial port for attaching old Commodore devices like the 1541 disk drive.

Up to two of the new 1551 drives (also in matching dark grey) could be attached in a chain to the cartridge port, transmitting data more than three times faster than the 1541.

Typing SYS DEC("CDAA") reveals the four names of the machine's developers.

Terry Ryan was told by a manager not to include the improved BASIC commands for loops (DO and WHILE); they were left in.

The HELP key automatically highlighted errors in the last BASIC program line the user entered.

COMMUNITY C16 SITES TO WATCH

COMMODORE16
www.commodore16.com
Chris Snowden's brilliant site offers visitors a hardware shop and a large library of games to download, allowing you to search by company, genre or year. Best of all, however, the Java emulator allows you to play over 300 great games online.



PLUS/4 WORLD
http://plus4.emucamp.com
First started in 1999, Plus/4 World is the most comprehensive site for the TED machines. Covering both C16 and Plus/4 with a detailed hardware section, the online encyclopaedia answers many questions on programming and troubleshooting.



YAPE
http://yape.homeserver.hu/
The name YAPE stands for 'Yet Another Plus/4 Emulator', but not only is it 'yet another' it also happens to be one of the best Commodore 16 emulators around. As well as the emulator, the site also features some rather interesting trivia about the machine.



COMMODORE.CA
www.commodore.ca
Dedicated to Commodore's history before the release of the Amiga, the Commodore.ca gallery contains a fascinating range of promotional material, manuals, television adverts and jingles. A great archive that any self-respecting Commodore fan needs to visit.





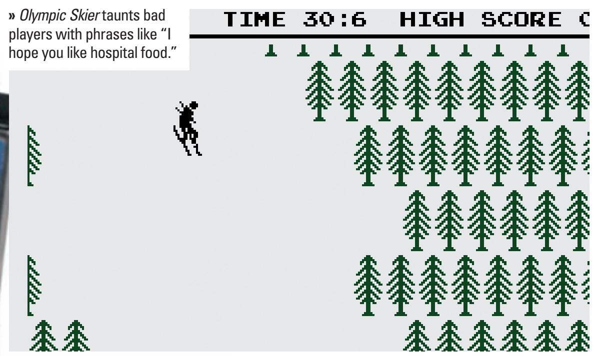


» The UK Starter Pack, with four games.









» *Olympic Skier* taunts bad players with phrases like "I hope you like hospital food."



» The tale of two Scottish drunks on a climbing frame – *Harvey Headbanger.*

VARIATIONS

C116
Engineer Bil Herd believes that the C116 was closest to Jack Tramiel's original vision. The rubber keyboard is more like a Spectrum's, with the 'diamond' cursor key layout and the case resembling the Plus/4. The C116 was only sold in Europe.



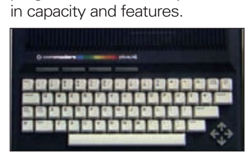
C232
A rare prototype that was based around the same Text Editing Device chip, only with 32KB of memory. Very few are known to currently exist – one with the serial number #000007 has been offered for sale at US$4,000.



264
The original name for the 64K machine, before marketing made the late decision to add the productivity software. The reset switch and the built-in machine code monitor were useful for programmers who wanted to debug their code.



PLUS/4
The Plus/4 came with built-in '3 Plus 1' software built-in, inspired by the success of Lotus 1-2-3. The software includes a word processor, spreadsheet, database and graph-drawing program, but all are very limited in capacity and features.



V364
The 'talking' computer appeared at the CES show but was canned soon afterwards. Three examples are believed to still exist. The machine talks with a 'SAY' command or in machine code, but it only has a 261-word vocabulary.



four applications was added to the 264 and it became the Plus/4 (and is deserving of its own Retroinspection). Production problems with the software ROMs and a shortage of DRAM memory chips delayed the Plus/4's release until the autumn of 1984. But the Commodore 16 and the Plus/4 both made their first European appearance at the Commodore Show in May 1984, taking place at the Novotel in London.

The new-look Commodore 16 model – dubbed by marketing in the USA as 'The Learning Machine' – would keep a link with the past by using the same style of case as the VIC-20 and Commodore 64, in a dark charcoal colour for the surround and light grey for the keys. Commodore UK's general manager Howard Stanforth announced, "The Commodore 16 is the perfect entry point for anyone interested in serious home computing. We've packaged it in a Starter Pack because the VIC-20 has already proved that that's what the public wants and we believe that in this form it offers the best deal anywhere for programming, education or games." The Starter Pack contained the computer, Datasette, *Introduction To BASIC Part 1* (to teach programming) and four games. Commodore stopped production of the VIC-20 to concentrate on the new machine, and supported the C16 and Plus/4 with several games from its own software division.

Competing for space on the shop shelves was difficult for the C16, with the Spectrum at its height and the new Amstrad machine attracting a lot of customers. Magazines paid limited attention, with few specialist titles and patchy coverage in existing titles (such as *Zzap*'s one-off C16 supplement). Large price cuts for the Commodore 64 also helped to reduce the C16's appeal, while the Spectrum was soon priced below £100 and under-cut the C16. Software companies were left with a dilemma – did they put resources into developing a separate 16K version? Or did they concentrate on the larger Plus/4? There were many disasters – Elite's cut-down *Commando* turned the vertically scrolling arcade game into a series of dull single screens, and the Commodore 16 version of *Saboteur* had a small playing area with badly animated sprites wandering around.

Three companies stood out for quality – Mastertronic, Gremlin and Anirog. Mastertronic produced several great budget titles, chief among them Jeff Minter's *Voidrunner/Hellgate* double pack. *Voidrunner* was the third in the *Gridrunner* series, inspired by arcade game *Centipede*. Gremlin was a big supporter of the C16 and Plus/4, converting well-known titles *Bounder* and *Monty On The Run* and creating original games for the format. Kingsoft was lucky to have ace programmer Udo Gertz, who really got the best out of the machine in games such as *Bongo* and *Winter Events*. Anirog, later to become Anco, published several of the Kingsoft titles in the UK. A key market for the C16 was behind the Iron Curtain in Hungary, where Novotrade produced a steady stream of titles.

Programmer Shaun Southern looks back at his long list of C16 titles. "*Trailblazer*, *Hummdinger*, *Arthur Noid* (oh dear, can you guess), *Super Snake*, *Laserwheel*, *POD*, *Jetbrix*, *Tutti Frutti*, *Bandits At Zero*, *Kik-Start*, *Speed King*, *Formula 1 Simulator*, *Pac-Mania* (based on the original 2D *Pac-Man*, not the later 3D game), *Duck Shoot* (based on *Carnival*), *Vegas Jackpot*, *Olympic Skier*… Good grief I'd forgotten half of those made it to the C16." When did he first get hold of the machine? "Late 1985 or early 1986. I know I had got one of the prototype Amigas (£700 or something ridiculous) when they first came out and ended up writing on the C16 instead. Not that the Amiga looked like hard work or anything, but I could work on the C16 by myself."

As for the machine itself, Shaun liked it. "It always seemed to be (and was) a cut-down 64, I guess they (Commodore) thought there was a market. It was certainly powerful enough and like most Commodore machines, lent itself to certain types of games. I remember it had more shades of colour than the C64. I liked that it was pretty much the same architecture, similar processor, and so on. I guess I also liked that I could write games for it quickly. Things had to be a bit simpler, but this meant more 'arcadey' style games. *Tutti Frutti* was *Mr. Do!/Dig Dug* and *Pengo* combined into one, and *Jetbrix* was fun – I based it on an old game I had published in *C&VG* in 1982, *Brickblaster*. And of course, as I'm sure you know, *Trailblazer* began life on the C16."

The *Kik-Start* game for the C16 was very different to the split-screen racer released for the C64. "Some games were pretty much exact copies of the C64 games, some totally different. *Kik-Start* turned into a (yet another) rip-off of an arcade game." The arcade game Shaun refers to is *Super Bike*, made as a conversion kit for *Donkey Kong* machines, where the player has to ride a bike over obstructions and burst balloons for bonus points. "Personally I think the C16 was a success, I don't know if it detracted from the C64, but I had plenty of 'hits' on it, I think at one point three or four games in the top ten. Budget games, of course. Mastertronic…"

The C16 and Plus/4 were overshadowed by the arrival of the all-singing, all-dancing 16-bit computers including Commodore's Amiga. And with the NES and Master System offering low-cost gaming, Commodore stopped production by 1988, selling off its inventory cheap. This did bring a new wave of users, buying machines at a lower cost from retailers like Urban General in the United States. But the TED machines live on through emulation, homebrew, hardware hacking and websites. The small but enthusiastic demo scene for the C16 and Plus/4 was celebrated with the 'We Are Family' DVDs, with new releases appearing all the time. New C16 games also appear regularly in the various mini-game competitions, where programmers try to cram a complete game into a small amount of memory.

Among the homebrew programmers is **Retro Gamer's** very own Jason Kelk, responsible for the puzzle game *Reaxion* that originally appeared on the C64 and some clever demos through the group Cosine. "The biggest difference between the C64 and C16 has to be the lack of hardware sprites on the C16. Action games therefore require software sprites; some of the 'nine to five' coders in the Eighties didn't seem to quite get it and there are a few games that really suffered such as the official port of *Commando*. Despite having over half as much processing power again as the Commodore 64, allowing for the jump in overheads for moving just one software sprite around takes a little getting used to." Does he consider it harder to program than the C64? "Depends on what is being coded, for puzzle games that rely primarily on character-based or bitmap graphics, for example, it's perfectly able to hold its own and can chuck bytes around at a very good rate. With the kind of action game I tend towards it's a harder machine to work with due to that lack of sprites. Apart from that it's pretty similar to the Commodore 64, except for the lower memory size on the C16 and C116 and way that the colour RAM works. One thing that takes getting used to is how the video system does two scanlines worth of data fetches to read the screen and colour data in where the C64 only has one. It mainly affects timed routines such as raster bars."

Kelk's favourite games include *Kik-Start*, a game he recently converted to the C64, and Shaun Southern's other C16 titles *Jetbrix* and *Tutti Frutti*. "Then there's *Spore* for the pretty devious level designs, Jeff Minter's excellent *Voidrunner* (everybody seems to forget the third '*Runner* title for some reason), and I've always had a soft spot for *Starforce Nova* even if it's not the greatest game ever developed…"

Jack Tramiel never got his 'Spectrum killer', and Commodore never dominated the low-cost market again thanks to poor management. But the Commodore 16 has a legacy of great games, and many enthusiastic supporters who grew to love the machine.



SPECIFICATIONS

CPU: MOS 7501 processor, running at 0.89MHz or 1.76MHz, TED (Text Editing Device) co-processor.

Memory: 32K of ROM, 16K of RAM – 12K available to BASIC programs.

Controls: Two joystick ports with Commodore's own eight-pin connectors, 66 keys with four function keys and two cursor keys.

Sound: Two-channel sound across four octaves, white noise generator.

Colour: 121 colours (15 colours at eight levels of luminance, plus black).

Video Resolution: 320x200 bitmap (2 colours per 'cell'), 320x160 (3 colours plus background per 'cell').



Credits: With thanks to Plus/4 World and Chris Snowden for images of various machines.





PERFECT TEN GAMES

If you need further proof of the Commodore 16's brilliance than cast your eyes over the following ten games. They might not have always been machine exclusive, but they all proved that there was far more to Commodore's machine than what first met the eye. How many of them have you played?

TOM THUMB

» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** ANIROG
» **CREATED BY:** UDO GERTZ
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** GHOST TOWN

01 **Platform games are** two-a-penny on the Commodore 16, but very few of them are put together with as much grace and style as Anirog's excellent *Tom Thumb*. Set in a massive (178 screens) scrolling environment and filled with a ridiculously large amount of hazards, *Tom Thumb* can certainly be infuriating in places, but it's been created with so much care and attention that you really can't help but be continually impressed with its gigantic scope.

Solidly animated and with some truly inventive level design, *Tom Thumb* easily leaps into our Commodore 16 Perfect Ten and proves that you don't need to be a miner or a rotund mole in order to be a great platforming hero.

BONGO

» **RELEASED:** 1984
» **PUBLISHER:** ANIROG
» **CREATED BY:** UDO GERTZ
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MOON BUGGY

02 **Anirog and Udo** Gertz get more than one spot in our C16 Perfect Ten, thanks primarily to their excellent use of the Commodore 16 hardware. The large characters are the first thing that you will notice about the brilliant *Bongo*. Taking its cue from Nintendo's classic *Popeye* arcade game, Bongo the rat is given the task of collecting the floating letters to spell out his name while trying to avoid the bad guy charging menacingly around the platforms. Bongo can move around using ladders, slides, trampolines and lifts, and he can also teleport between the big letters on the screen. And once you get hooked in, there is a construction kit for you to make your very own levels to challenge your friends with.



01

TUTTI FRUTTI

» **RELEASED:** 1985
» **PUBLISHER:** MASTERTRONIC
» **CREATED BY:** SHAUN SOUTHERN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** FINDERS KEEPERS

03 **Proving that he's** some sort of C16 god, the excellent efforts of Shaun Southern appear no less than four times in our top ten. Anyway, as if you couldn't guess from the accompanying screenshot, *Tutti Frutti* is a homage to *Mr. Do!* and while it doesn't quite match the sheer majesty of the BBC's *Mr Ee!*, this is nevertheless very good stuff.

Level design is of a high standard, and the varied ways of completing stages mean that you'll always want to try new things in order to achieve a new high score. As with many of Southern's games though, it's the sheer slickness of the overall product that constantly manages to impress.

BANDITS AT ZERO

» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** MASTERTRONIC
» **CREATED BY:** SHAUN SOUTHERN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** HEKTIK

04 **Another classic effort** from legendary coder Shaun Southern. This time he's turned his hand to Eugene Jarvis's *Defender*, the end result, *Bandits At Zero* is another piece of scintillating code that squeezes every last ounce out of the C16's limited capabilities.

Prepare to be amazed as the on-screen action literally pelts along in front of your eyes. Although it shares many similarities with *Defender*, the addition of having to refuel is a nice touch, as you really have to check your speed and altitude so you don't break away from the refuelling plane.

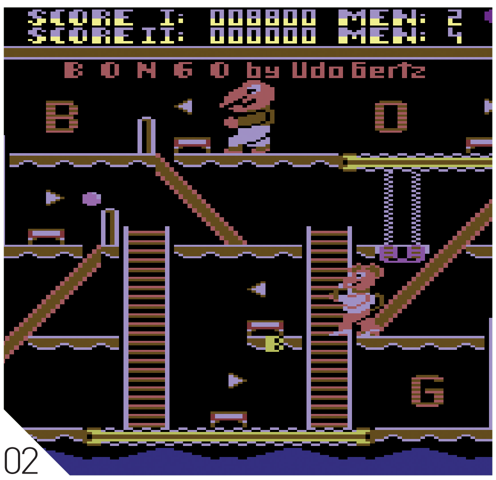
Yes it's another clone, but when it's put together with this much skill it's hard not to be impressed.

HARVEY HEADBANGER

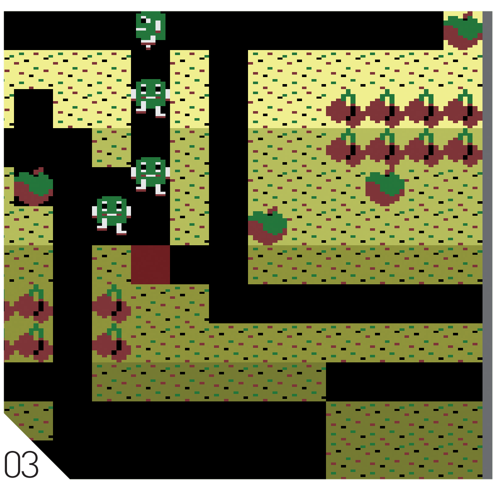
» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** FIREBIRD
» **CREATED BY:** KEVIN A MOUGHTIN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SPIKY HAROLD

05 **A game promoting** drinking? The *Daily Mail* would have a field day with *Harvey Headbanger*... Regardless of its moral message, *Harvey Headbanger* is a cracking multiplayer effort that sees the blue blob racing around the screen painting it blue (while rival, Hamish Highball is busy painting it red). Encapsulate your rival's colour and you'll create cocktails that will boost Harvey's ability to recover from the collisions he has with Hamish. Stun Hamish and you can encircle him and score a precious point.

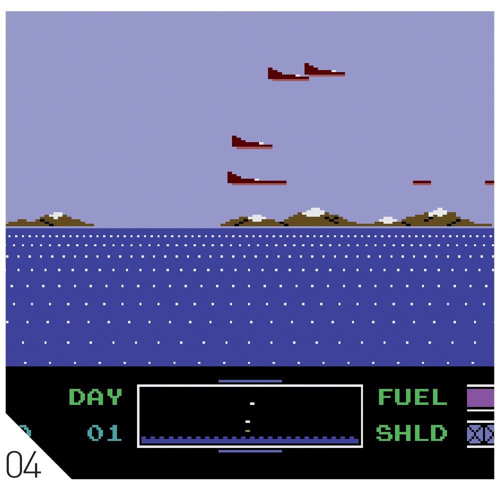
Highly recommended.



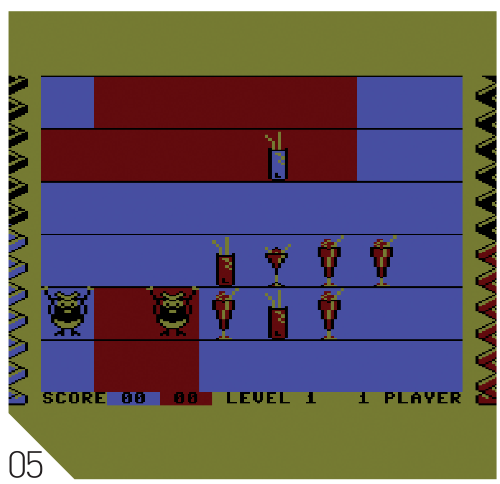
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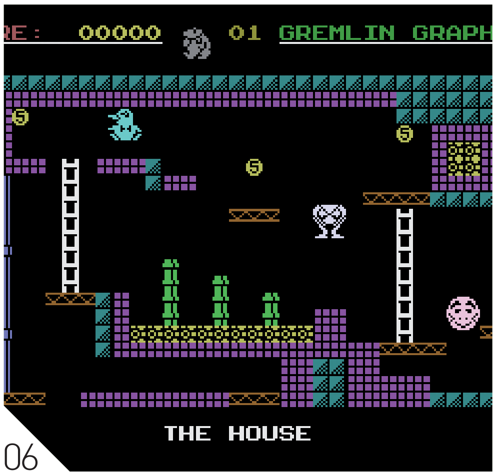
03



04



05



06



07



08

AUF WIEDERSEHEN MONTY

- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
- » **CREATED BY:** JASON PERKINS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MONTY ON THE RUN

06 **Auf Wiedersehen Monty** was something of a chore on the Speccy, C64 and Amstrad, due to a pointless intermission screen and obscure puzzles. But on the C16, the game returns to its platforming roots. Without the puzzle solving, this cut-down conversion is all about grabbing coins from hard-to-reach places and avoiding the menagerie of mutant beings suddenly peppering the European scenery. Although far more succinct than other versions, the C16 release is much more fun, and offers more open movement. It also has a good stab at playing Hubbard and Daglish's C64 soundtrack.

KIK-START

- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PUBLISHER:** MASTERTRONIC
- » **CREATED BY:** SHAUN 'SOUT' SOUTHERN
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ARTHUR NOID

07 **Ignore the name** – aside from the treacherous obstacles, annoying tune and the fact you ride a dirt bike, this game has little to do with its C64 namesake. Instead, *Kik-Start* on the C16 is an out-and-out 'against the clock' arcade game, with you trying desperately to reach the end of each stage before the clock runs out, so you can carry on to the next. Cute graphics, decent sound effects and tight gameplay are marred slightly by the game's difficulty. But once mastered, this game proves itself to be yet another classic in Sout's arsenal, and a worthy alternative to *Kik-Start 2* on the C64.

TRAILBLAZER

- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
- » **CREATED BY:** SHAUN 'SOUT' SOUTHERN
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** P.O.D.

08 **The C16 was** actually where Sout's fantastic and unique checkerboard racing game started out. The object is to guide your bouncing ball along a 3D track strewn with holes and multi-coloured tiles. Some tiles do things to your ball (speed it up, fling it into the air, and so on) and holes cause you to waste precious seconds, which isn't good, since you're racing against the clock. As with *Kik-Start*, this is a more linear experience than the C64 release, and it lacks the simultaneous two-player mode. However, it has a purity of gameplay and level of polish that sets it apart from most other games on the platform.



09

WINTER EVENTS

- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PUBLISHER:** ANCO
- » **CREATED BY:** UDO GERTZ
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUMMER EVENTS

09 **With a mere** 16KB to play with, many sports titles on the C16 were sorely limited, but Anco bucked the trend by ambitiously aping Epyx's *Winter Games* and releasing this magnificent and visually stunning six-event sports simulation. Amusingly, the two tedious skating events from Epyx's game were replaced with much more exciting '3D' downhill and slalom events, and decent versions of biathlon, speed skating, ski jump and bobsleigh must have had the typical C16 owner at the time checking to see if some wag had switched machines behind their back. But, no, it was just the genius of Udo Gertz, who also programmed the similarly accomplished *Summer Events*.

VOIDRUNNER

- » **RELEASED:** 1987 (WITH HELLGATE)
- » **PUBLISHER:** ARIOLASOFT/LLAMASOFT
- » **CREATED BY:** JEFF MINTER
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MATRIX + LASER ZONE

10 **Jeff Minter was** always at his best when working with seriously restricted technology, squeezing every last ounce of power from the most modest of hardware. This pseudo-sequel to *Gridrunner* is no exception, offering plentiful levels of frenetic blasting, varied attack patterns, and psychedelic special effects. The game is actually more playable than its C64 cousin – it somehow just feels better – and it also takes advantage of the C16's enhanced colour palette, which makes the game far prettier than the version Llamasoft released for Commodore's breadbin. (Minter fans should note that *Matrix* also kicks some serious shoot-'em-up bottom on the C16.)



10

Special thanks to Craig Grannell for making the impossible possible.



THE MAKING OF...

SAMBA DE AMIGO





» The Dreamcast version of *Samba* features an exclusive Love Love mode for co-op play between couples. Spicy stuff.





WITH SAMBA DE AMIGO BACK IN THE LIMELIGHT THANKS TO ITS OUT-OF-HOUSE Wii REVIVAL, JONTI DAVIES TALKS WITH THE GROOVY CHAP WHO GOT US ALL SHAKING OUR MARACAS IN THE FIRST PLACE – SEGA'S DIRECTOR OF SAMBA, SHUN NAKAMURA

If you've played *Samba De Amigo* you will know full well why it's being featured in these pages: its sense of fun is undeniable and all-conquering, and those maracas, sought-after and prized, are brilliant extravagances from the historical moments before Sega's demotion from the world of console manufacturing. Okay, it's only just last century, but *Samba*'s position in the (recent) history of videogames is a highly significant one. For one thing, it gave impetus to the global uptake of rhythm-action games using instrument controllers, with *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero* both owing a debt to Sonic Team's innovation. For another, it anticipated the current Wii-led craze for very physical interaction with games.

"*Samba De Amigo* was conceived in 1999," the game's director Shun Nakamura recalls. "That was when I drew up the plans for the game, and it all went from there. At that time Japan was experiencing the same kind of music game boom that is currently taking over Europe and America, but I think [Japanese rhythm-action games] were trying a bit too hard to appear cool and therefore were quite difficult to enjoy actually playing. Games are supposed to be fun, but those games were too difficult to approach – I remember thinking, 'I really want to play music games that are just fun…' So it was with that in mind – wanting to increase the fun quotient [of Japanese rhythm-action games] – that I produced the plans [for *Samba De Amigo*]."

Samba De Amigo's maracas controllers are key to both arcade and Dreamcast versions of the experience. We ask Shun whether other instruments were considered before he decided that maracas were the way to go: "No," he explains. "From the beginning right through to the end of development, there was no question that we'd use maracas with the game – we didn't even think about other instruments, because we knew that maracas would have the greatest impact and would also throw up plenty of interesting possibilities because of the versatility of the instrument and its wide range of applicable playing styles."

Although Shun's confidence in the merits of maracas was unshakeable (sorry), outsiders seem to have been sceptical. "Whenever I mentioned this idea of using maracas to anyone [outside of the dev team], the response was always the same: people laughed at us. They'd say, 'Are you serious? That sounds like a stupid game…'"

Konami's *Guitar Freaks* and *DrumMania* were popular in Japan's arcades back in 1999, but Shun wasn't taken with such games. For a start, they were perceived by the *Samba* team to be too difficult, too complicated and not really conducive to "stupid fun". Part of the problem with such games, Shun reckons, is simply down to the instruments they use: "I think guitars and drums and such difficult instruments are cool," he says, "but you have to use your head – you have to think when playing them – and the threshold [for being able to play] is quite high. As far as I was concerned, anyone could easily have some fun just by shaking a pair of maracas, so I felt that maracas were far and away the best choice of instrument for this project. For all of the staff working on *Samba De Amigo*, this was our first experience of making a music game, so we researched other music games first and then went ahead with production by trying to do something simpler and more easily enjoyable than those games."

The decision-makers at Sega, however, never had much faith in the *Samba De Amigo* project, and this was reflected in a number of key areas: team size, deadlines and pressure. "*Samba De Amigo* was seen within Sega as being something of an experimental title," Shun explains. "We were told [by the higher-ups at Sega] that if the arcade location tests were a failure, the project would be cancelled immediately. Because of that [kind of pressure], we felt we had to work extremely hard to ensure that it would be a success. The production team on *Samba* was less than ten people – it was a really small team. The same team members produced both the arcade and Dreamcast versions, and we ended up doing *Samba De Amigo* and *Samba De Amigo Ver. 2000* [without any additional members]. And on top of that, most of the developers were newcomers who had no previous game development experience. That's how experimental [Sega deemed] this project [to be]…"

In spite of the internal pressure on Shun and his team of maracas-shaking developers, he says *Samba De Amigo* progressed well in the face of adversity: "I think development was relatively smooth. Production of the game itself took us only five months, which

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
» **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
» **RELEASED:** 1999
» **GENRE:** RHYTHM-ACTION
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10 (OR £90 WITH THE MARACAS; £20 FOR SAMBA VER. 2000)

THE MAKING OF... SAMBA DE AMIGO





was obviously a really short period of time. From the beginning of development the project's deadline for completion was already in place, and we knew that if the arcade location testing didn't go well, that would be it. At first we didn't even have any prototype controllers to use, so we really had to use our imaginations and guesswork while we were making the framework of the game, but our most difficult challenge was to get the controller movement recognised by the game. Initially, we didn't know whether it would be possible for the controllers' co-ordinates and movement through the air to be recognised, and we were also concerned that people might not be willing to play something so far removed from traditional games with traditional control methods. We had to conduct all sorts of experiments, because before *Samba De Amigo* no games had used controllers like these. After the arcade machine had gone into production, I remember going to the factory for an inspection just to check on how the maracas controllers were turning out."

Ah yes, the maracas. The tools that made *Samba De Amigo* what it was. The red plastic, the convincing weight and the satisfyingly real percussive noise of the Dreamcast-adapted maracas controllers made them more desirable even than the *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram* Twin Sticks or the *Get Bass* fishing-rod controller. And Shun explains that we're lucky the coin-op replica Dreamcast maracas controllers, and the console port itself, were even manufactured: "At the time of the development of the arcade version, the Dreamcast maracas controllers hadn't been approved and production of them hadn't been given the go-ahead. The coin-op's maracas controllers were using a new sensing system [which we] called 'space recognition' – they weren't simple devices – so the production cost there was considerable. We were really worried about whether or not people would buy the controllers [if we made Dreamcast-compatible versions of them], but on the other hand, the arcade machine had gained a really good reputation by that point, so we eventually started to discuss developing a companion Dreamcast conversion of the game. The *Samba* arcade was a hit in Japan, which helped the Dreamcast *Samba* [and maracas controllers] sell reasonably well here. Abroad, because the coin-op wasn't as well known, fewer people were willing to pay over the odds for the [Dreamcast] maracas controllers."

> **"At first we didn't even have any prototype controllers to use, so we really had to use our imaginations and guesswork while we were making the framework of the game"**
>
> SHUN NAKAMURA ON HIS TEAM'S DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

It's ironic that although Shun set out to make *Samba* a simpler experience than what he saw as the overly difficult Bemani-oriented games of the day, *Samba De Amigo* itself ended up pushing players' rhythmic abilities to the limits. The difference, of course, is in *Samba*'s fun-fun-fun exterior and its well-paced progress towards becoming genuinely difficult – it carefully eases players into the game and never takes two steps at a time, but does eventually become an intense challenge. Yet, without sufficient backing to undertake focus group testing or hire external QA assistants, Shun reveals that *Samba*'s gameplay balance was left for the development team to sort out.

"*Samba*'s difficulty curve was entirely set according to our own experiences of playing the game," Shun confirms. "Because it's a music game, you need to be able to dance to the rhythm, so there's a limit to how complex the rhythms could be. And there were also the physical limitations of what players would be able to achieve. Super Hard mode went beyond those two principles, more or less taking it to the point where you wouldn't be able to play without first remembering everything. Of course we imposed a proviso to the effect that we, the development staff, had to be able to clear the tracks in Super Hard mode 100 per cent. I remember shaking the maracas from morning to the following morning as part of the game testing process. And as I was shaking the comparatively heavy arcade maracas, I ended up getting really bad muscle pains in my arms…"

After the maracas controller, the next most important ingredient of *Samba*'s success was the soundtrack. "It seems that many people initially thought of *Samba* as a game that specialised in Latin music," Shun complains, "but as far as we were concerned there wasn't any reason for us to be limited to Latin music. Generally speaking, we selected bright, cheerful and fun tracks that would be impossible to play along to nonchalantly – the kind of tunes you have to be really stupid [with the maracas] to enjoy. We also thought it was important to choose music that most people would have heard somewhere, be it on TV or in commercials, even though they might not know the names of the tracks. Then, when they heard a tune in the game [after selecting a title they weren't necessary familiar with], players would say, 'Oh, I know this!' We chose tracks like that because there's a massive difference in how easy it is to ride the rhythm of a song you're familiar with and one that you've never heard before. But we still found it difficult to choose [the most] appropriate tracks…"

Ultimately the arcade location testing went well enough for Sega to keep the project alive, and Shun says the game was also helped by a strong positive reaction whenever it was shown at events around Japan: "At the Tokyo Game Show and the AOU exhibition and other events, I have fond memories of how popular the game was and how happy the *Samba* team members were to see the reaction of attendees. But I also remember being told to get up on stage and dance, which was so embarrassing it was quite painful…" Oh well, that's the price you pay for developing software and hardware that can be enjoyed by onlookers as much as by the participants.

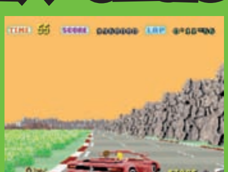
Eventually, with the *Samba* coin-op proving popular in Japan and production of the Dreamcast game and its controllers complete, Shun and co were able to look back on the whole experience and class the project as a job extremely well done. The ongoing popularity of *Samba* has proved Shun's 'Theory Of The Universal Appeal Of Puerto Rican Percussion Instruments' to be correct, but he humbly refuses to say 'I told you so' to any of the doubters. Instead, he signs off by telling us: "To be honest, I'm surprised that people still think of *Samba* so highly eight years after its release. But then, I'm seeing people laugh and smile as they watch and play the new Wii version… There are a lot of 'serious' games out there, but I really like the fact that anyone can behave stupidly and thereby enjoy [*Samba*]."



» The Dreamcast-exclusive battle mode introduces a competitive angle to the action, but *Samba* never feels like anything other than a party.



SIX CLASSIC SONGS



Magical Sound Shower
Yu Suzuki's favourite *OutRun* tune appeared in *Samba Ver. 2000* via the game's download service. *Magical Sound Shower* is the (instrumental) anthem of an entire generation, of course – the synth-euphoric ode to videogaming joy.

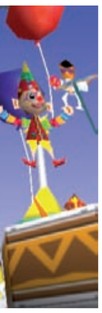


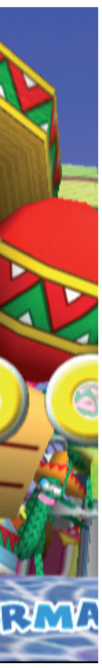
We Are Burning Rangers
The theme song to Sonic Team's superb *Burning Rangers* Saturn game, it was available on three-inch CD as part of the Japanese version of that title prior to reappearing in *Samba 2000*, again as a downloadable track.



Hot Hot Hot (Arrow)
Alphonsus Cassell's 1983 soca-pop classic's easy adaptability for the lyrically challenged means you'll hear versions of *Hot Hot Hot* at football grounds around the world, but its greatest adaptation is naturally in *Samba*.











DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

NIGHTS INTO DREAMS…
(PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: SATURN, PS2
YEAR: 1996

BURNING RANGERS
SYSTEMS: SATURN
YEAR: 1998

CHUCHU ROCKET!
SYSTEMS: DREAMCAST, GBA
YEAR: 1999





» Mistiming shakes in *Samba De Amigo* sours the atmosphere somewhat, so it's best to really get into the game and shake like your very sombrero depended on it.

» Pure percussive electricity.







» New mini-games were added to the mix for *Ver. 2000*.



» Amigo the monkey grins with obvious tequila-fuelled passion. Shun Nakamura wanted a fun game, not a "cool" one, and this is how it turned out.



Tequila (Terrorvision)
Produced by none other than Edwyn Collins, Terrorvision's *Tequila* is thematically well suited to *Samba De Amigo* and the spirited activities surrounding its play in homes around Britain (if not so much in Japan).



Macarena (Los Del Rio)
For pure cheesiness, *Macarena* is without equal. It's a track that is perfect for dancing and ripe for percussive augmentation. And, with its Latin vibe, it fits in nicely with *Samba De Amigo*'s imagery and Amigo's bobbing sombrero.



Tubthumping (Chumbawamba)
If any song captures the anarchy of *Samba De Amigo* most aptly, it's Chumbawamba's *Tubthumping*, which was one of the early tracks in the original game. Riot of colour on screen, riot of sound from speakers: nice match.

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

THE TALE OF SHINY IS REMARKABLY MELANCHOLIC. IN THE MID TO LATE-NINETIES DAVID PERRY'S TEAM WENT FROM MAVERICK GAME STUDIO TO ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING DEVELOPERS IN THE WORLD. SHINY PUSHED ENVELOPES, TECHNOLOGY AND IMAGINATIONS TO BREAKING POINT, BUT WHILE ITS TALENTS BROUGHT IT SUCCESS AND NOTORIETY, IT WOULD ULTIMATELY ALSO LEAD TO ITS FRACTURE

Shiny Entertainment (PART 2)



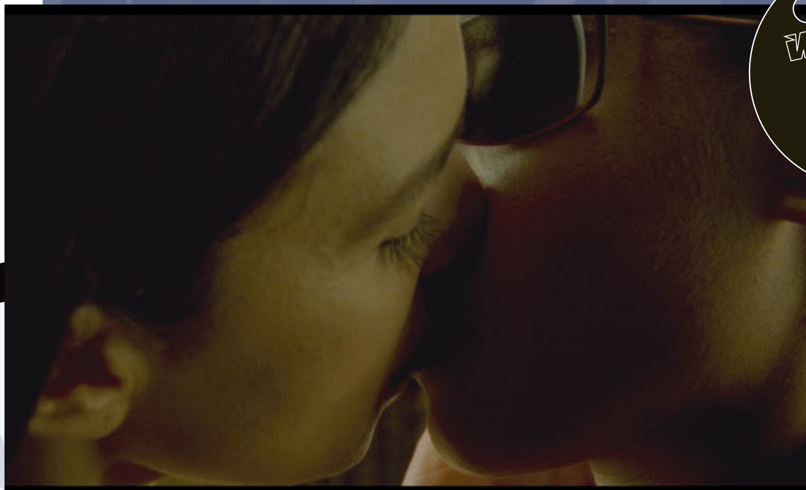
Shiny founder David Perry.

No sooner had the jet lag dispersed, David was assigned his first game for Virgin. *Global Gladiators* was an 'advert game' for McDonalds, but with a casual anti-pollution message. For the game's development Virgin took the decision to use the bones of another platform game that it already had in development, called *Mick & Mack,* but McDonalds had other ideas.

"I remember this big McDonalds executive in my office, very unhappy because you couldn't buy burgers and fries in the game. We were like, 'what?' No one wants to stand at a counter buying fake burgers and fries that they can't eat in the game. What we did instead was put Ronald McDonald at the very end of the level, waving a chequered flag, somehow that made him happy, and we shipped it," recalls David.

Global Gladiators was awarded 'Game of the Year' by Sega, and garnered rave reviews from many Sega magazines of the day. Impressed by the game's success, Sega contacted David's publisher Virgin wanting to partner with their rights to 7 Up's Cool Spot character, and asked whether his team would be interested in helping the company make a game using the property.

"After *Cool Spot*, Sega came back to us and said they had the rights to *Aladdin*," says David. "I guess Disney wasn't approving whatever progress was being made. So I got to meet with the President of Sega (Tom Kalinske) and I remember sitting in his office 100 days before it was due to ship. My team kicked butt, buried with assets, I literally had to sleep in my car to get the game finished at Virgin, it was just exhausting, but we ended up shipping on time. *Aladdin* was a really good thing for us because it was the first time that movie directors had actually got involved in the creation of a game. Disney Feature Animations were animation gods at that



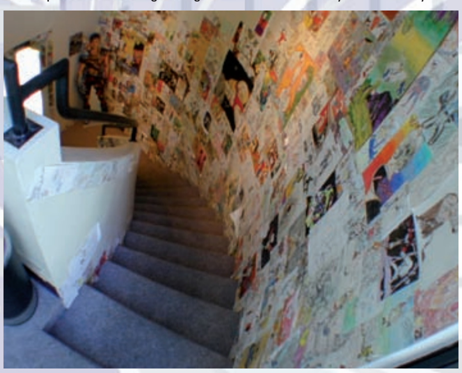
Ⓐ A clip of the infamous girl-on-girl kiss scene exclusively shot for Shiny's *Enter The Matrix* (easy boys).

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

At the time that Shiny was readying the change from 2D to 3D it lost quite a few members of its original team. Doug TenNapel and Mike Dietz left to start up the game studio The Neverhood. Like Shiny, Neverhood's projects all took an innovative approach to game design. Its first game, *The Neverhood*, was the first videogame constructed entirely with clay animation. After releasing two further games – *SkullMonkeys* and *Boombots* – the company dissolved. Doug TenNapel went on to become a writer for Nickelodeon and Mike Dietz still works in the industry as a freelance animator.

Shiny's affiliation with Hollywood eventually saw Christian Laursen write, direct and shoot his own film, and level designer Tom Tanaka and character designer Kevin Monroe work together on the CG *TMNT* movie, released last year, with Kevin actually writing and directing the movie. Nick Jones, who programmed the SNES version of *Earthworm Jim*, now works for 2K Games developing its successful 2K Sports series.

Soon after the release of *MDK*, Nick Bruty, Bob Stevenson and Andy Astor formed their own studio called Planet Moon Studios. The company went on to make the games *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*, *Armed And Dangerous* and *After Burner: Black Falcon*. Sadly, Andy tragically died of cancer and Bob has started a new iPhone game publishing company called NGMOCO.



Ⓐ A rare shot of Shiny's Laguna Beach offices.





Ⓐ *R/C Stunt Copter*. Not quite what David had in mind, but still good fun.

time, we'd carefully handle each frame they drew for us, scan it, colour it (section by section) and test it in the engine. That's how we did the frames for *Aladdin*, but that meant it all had to be tracked, every piece of paper, because the individual frames were so valuable to Disney.

"At the time I was already working on the prototype of *Jungle Book*," continues David. "We had an artist called Christian Laursen, and he blew my mind, the backgrounds he was generating were stunning, and the Mowgli animation was done by Mike Dietz – again, I'd never seen such great game animation. So basically we had this great *Jungle Book* game on the way, but we raided the team and some ideas to make *Aladdin*. It was at that time that Virgin asked me to wrap up *Jungle Book*, but we had borrowed a lot from *Jungle Book* so we really needed to restart. Virgin/Sega sold over a hundred million dollars of *Aladdin* games, and it was then I started thinking to myself, 'maybe it's time to start my own company'."

And fate stepped in when David received two job offers.

"Sega's Roger Hector asked me to be the CTO (chief technical officer) of the Sega Technical Institute, which I had not heard of before," he explains. "It was this office that was doing all kinds of advanced R&D for Sega. The job would have meant that all of their developers would have reported to me, so I would have been Yuji Naka's boss, which I found highly amusing as I thought he was a superstar. I wasn't that interested in the job but I was really interested in meeting him, so I interviewed for the job."

David was then asked if he would head up game development for Playmates Toys who, after making a billion dollars from the Ninja Turtle toys, was eager to enter the game space. David declined Playmates' offer but came back with a deal of his own; if Playmates agreed to fund his own development studio, in return it would have the exclusive rights to the studio's first three games. Playmates crunched the numbers and then lent David $3 million to start up Shiny, and he set about hiring his favourite people from within the industry.

"The 'yes' came too quickly," remembers David, "we hadn't any plan of what we were going to make. Playmates suggested we make a game starring one of their characters so we sat down and the team were looking at all these different properties. But there was no real excitement among my team members. I think that privately we wanted to make something original, but because we were working with a big company we had to take the time to consider all the options."

It was then that a few members of David's team suggested that he hire animator Doug TenNapel. Doug was working on a *Jurassic Park* game for Dreamworks Interactive at the time. David agreed to hire him if he passed a character animation test, and Doug ended up demoing the first walk cycle of Earthworm Jim. "I liked his work, but I saw huge potential in the character," David recalls. "I ended up betting the company on it. Oh, and of course Doug got the job."

"If you go to a Hollywood studio and try to get them to look at your property it's quite difficult. But because I was the 'game guy' they were happy to hear my opinion on their properties," says David. "So I would meet with Sony, Warner or Universal, and listen to their ideas before I'd say, 'Would you like to see something that I think might make a good movie but is going to be a good videogame?' And invariably they said, 'Sure, let me have a look'. So I pulled *Earthworm Jim* out of my bag and I showed it to the head of licensing for Universal Cartoon Studios, and he loved it, so did Warner Kids Network."

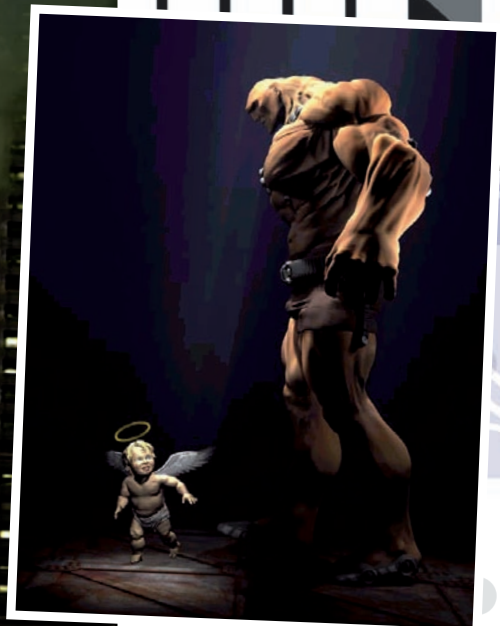
With interest from both Universal and Playmates the press soon grew very excited, and Shiny and Jim would find themselves splashed across many magazine covers. And the marketing maelstrom didn't settle. Never before had a development studio licensed out as aggressively as Shiny. Soon there were



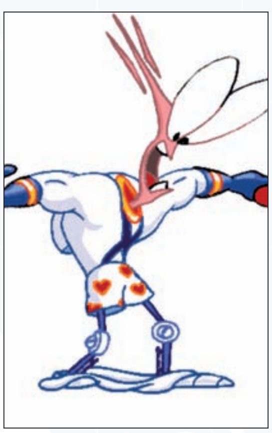
Ⓐ Jim's face was splashed pretty much everywhere, from toys to lunchboxes and even on Y-fronts (quite probably).

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK





Shiny was originally toying with the idea of having the final Smith boss in *Path Of Neo* take the form of a giant Godzilla-type monster.



Some concept art of Jim caught with his trousers down.

Earthworm Jim Halloween masks, bed sheets, underpants, a TV show and even a Marvel comic book.

"I remember going to see Sega with *Earthworm Jim*," says David. "I went to see the VP of acquisitions at Sega, Chris Garske, and I go into their office in San Francisco, with the head of Playmates, and he sat us down and started explaining to me how difficult it was to publish on the Genesis (Mega Drive), and that we couldn't be guaranteed slots any more, kind of preparing me for the worst. So we sit through this whole thing and I pull out the game and demonstrated it to them. Let's just say it was a day and night conversation once he saw all the game running live, all the doors swung open."

Shiny immediately began work on an *Earthworm Jim* sequel, but a potential disaster was looming on the horizon. The industry was sauntering towards 3D gaming and David was faced with a tough decision. Shiny had amassed a team of talented 2D artists; some of the best in the business, and in a relatively short period had refined its unique brand of 2D technology – which it called 'Animotion'. But it was clear the industry was leaning towards three-dimensional gaming, so David eventually accepted the inevitable, and began researching and recruiting 3D experts and investing his own money on new equipment.

"The mistake I made was I was hiring people who were experts in that field not people who were interested in games," admits David. "I was also buying very expensive Silicon Graphics computers, too. It was like $25,000 per computer and the software was $25,000, plus you had to pay subscription fees, which were something like $10,000. So I'm writing these cheques and I'm hiring in people that I know don't even like the games we're working on, and the original team didn't like it and it caused a big rift. That was around the time that Interplay came along and wanted to buy Shiny."

Interplay's interest in Shiny came about when it licensed *Earthworm Jim Special Edition* on the Sega CD.

"*Earthworm Jim Special Edition* was a much better deal for us than it was for Interplay, and I think they kind of liked that experience; they knew we were really pretty serious," says David. "I was just looking at the whole thing thinking that this was a great time to get out, so I sold the company to Interplay and then (doh!) my team turned out to be great at 3D. Once they applied themselves and started really working on it. In the actual sale, the deal nearly fell through over the last $10,000. We couldn't work it out. So, being gamers, we decided to bet it on a game of pool. And I nearly won that damn game of pool!"

"We had a programmer called Andy Astor, and Andy was my tools guy. When we were making *Earthworm Jim* he was making the tools, and on *Earthworm Jim 2* he started to write game code as well. By *Earthworm Jim Special Edition* he handled the conversion by himself, but we didn't realise his true powers. He was convinced he could do 3D and so put together a 3D engine, completely from scratch by himself. So we ended up getting him a support programmer called Martin Brownlow."

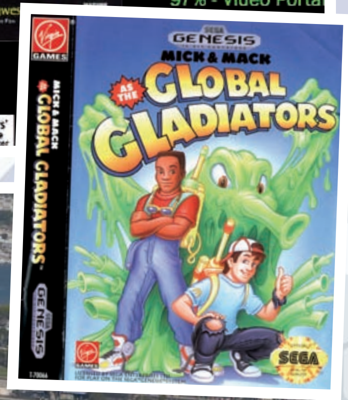
Playmates then asked Shiny to deliver it another big game, one to match the success of *Earthworm Jim*, and that's when the team pitched *MDK*. But Playmates had its reservations about the appeal of the game.

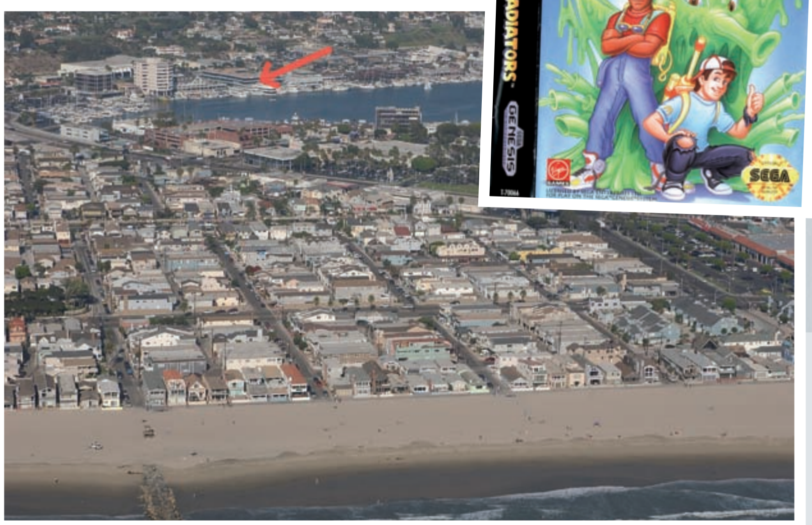
"We had all these storyboards explaining how the first ever videogame sniper rifle would have worked, but they just weren't interested," says David. "So Nick Bruty and Bob Stevenson sat down with a 3D package (3D Studio) and rendered the whole thing out in 3D, using the storyboards that we had. We asked Playmates for a second meeting, played them the video and they got terribly excited. They were like, 'Oh my god, this is great!' They wanted to make toys, get a television show going, the same story again."

With the game under way, David approached Canadian CG animation studio, Mainframe Entertainment to get an *MDK*



If you need any reason to play *Sacrifice*, run your eyes over these scores.





Shiny's plush-looking Newport retreat, unfortunately it came with an annoying red arrow protruding from the roof.

television show off the ground. Mainframe created the kids' computer-generated television show *ReBoot* and David wanted CG for *MDK*. So he went to Canada and pitched the Mainframe team the idea, and they agreed to make the show.

"It was the same story again, we had the toys, we had the TV show," he explains. "So we had a meeting at Interplay, and you have to remember that I don't own the company any more – this is where I started to regret my decision. We had the deposit cheque to get the whole thing rolling from the toy company and basically it was the signing meeting. So we're all waiting for the celebration drink and then the President of Interplay (out of the blue) decided not to sign the deal. He thought, 'why am I going through all these people, why can't we do all of this ourselves?' It was the most frustrating meeting of my life. To have a television show lined up, a toy line lined up – and I knew that once you get those two everything else comes with it, we would have had comic books and videotapes and everything else, it all just collapsed in one meeting for no good reason. It was a dumb decision, and so the whole thing fell apart on me."

Frustrated, David and his team continued with *MDK*, and the game proved another huge success for Shiny and Playmates, further enforcing Shiny's reputation for delivering innovative and exciting videogames and finally coming to end its licence agreement. It was then Interplay would begin farming out sequels to Shiny's properties. It made another *Earthworm Jim* game with Crave, *Earthworm Jim 3D* with Scottish developer VIS Entertainment, and then handed the *MDK* reigns over to RPG stalwarts BioWare.

"We didn't really want to get involved," says David. "I think what we would have done was shelved them, and done what Blizzard does and do a property then leave it alone for a while. At that time I was responsible for the budgets. The way videogame studios work is you have this certain amount of overhead and if you have one game, it has to carry it all on its back, so I, in my infinite wisdom, decided to start four games at once, which was just the most stupid move ever."

The four games the team began working on were *Sacrifice*, *Messiah*, *Wild 9* and *Stunt Copter*, but the mammoth undertaking of working four projects soon took its toll on the team. "Talent was spread thin, and we were so out of space you couldn't get a credit card between people in the office," remembers David.

"We were making a model helicopter game because I liked model helicopters, *Messiah* was a game where we were trying to get across the idea of possession, and it used a new tessellation technology that had not been seen before. And then *Sacrifice* started after that and used the *Messiah* engine, on steroids. *Wild 9* was a game where I had this idea about being able to grab your enemy and manipulate them, forcing them into the traps they set for you. All the games had a reason why I wanted to make them, but we never had the bandwidth to handle four games, and it created four factions in the company, which wasn't really what Shiny was all about. It was a very difficult time."

Despite the mounting pressure within Shiny, *Messiah* did have some cool tech, *Sacrifice* became one of the highest rated real-time strategy games ever, and *Wild 9* was licensed by Sony in Japan and had plenty of fans, but the games just weren't big sellers for Interplay.

"Our helicopter game was based on flying model helicopters," says David. "When you fly a model helicopter for real you're scared of breaking it, so you end up kind of just setting it on the grass and

THE DAVE-O-GRAPHY



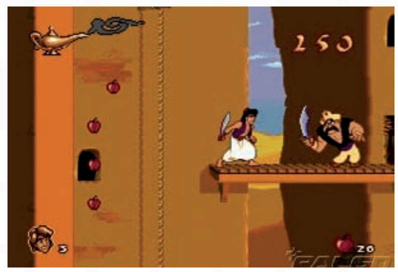
Global Gladiators

Kids love videogames, kids love McDonalds and kids love saving the planet (apparently). *Global Gladiators* boasted great design, fluid animation and a fantastic musical score written by Tommy Tallarico, which used real instrument samples – a first for a videogame. It was heralded as a triumph upon its release, and quickly brought David to the attention of Sega after it won Game of the Year.



Cool Spot

In the Nineties soft drinks giant 7 Up figured it would take the red full stop nestled between the '7' and 'Up' inside their logo, and turn it into a mascot – cue Cool Spot. The game was praised for its glorious and smooth-looking visuals and was hailed as being one of the best-looking games on the Mega Drive. Gameplay-wise it would be fair to say that *Cool Spot* is actually identical to *Global Gladiators*: bound and blast collect-a-thon action.



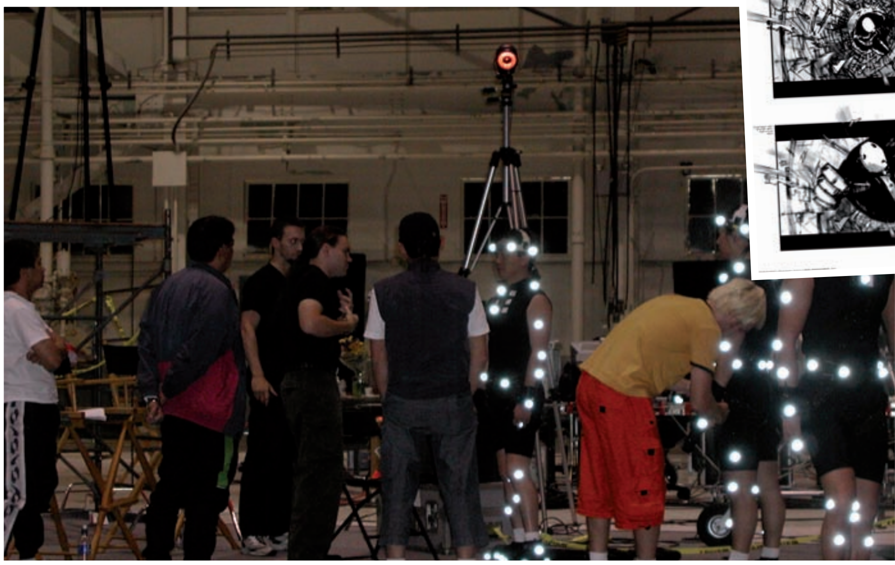
Disney's Aladdin

Aladdin was so popular on its release that the hype surrounding the game came to stifle the impact of *Street Fighter II*'s late appearance on the Mega Drive. *Aladdin*'s bright and buoyant visuals captured Disney's eye-watering visuals brilliantly, and Tommy Tallarico was back again doing brilliant things with the game's score, adapting several compositions from the movie using real instrument samples.



Earthworm Jim

Based on a creation by Doug TenNapel, it was a worm wearing a spacesuit that Shiny would select as its first project. It was a good call, as it turned Shiny into one of the industry's most exciting developers, almost overnight. *Earthworm Jim*'s sense of humour, quirky characters and run-'n'-gun action quickly found Jim worming his way into the hearts and minds of Mega Drive owners the world over.







David (on the right) walks the red carpet with Keanu Reeves (on the left).

trying to lift it up an inch off the ground and set it back down. What's interesting is you start to challenge yourself mentally to see what you're capable of doing, you keep giving yourself incrementally more complicated goals. So we made this prototype and there was no game, but it was really surprisingly addictive and I decided to fund it. Our intention was to sell it as cheap as possible on the PlayStation, but Interplay didn't want it (too risky). So I pitched it to Midway, they liked it and we did the deal with them, they then turned it into a different game (big and complicated), I stepped out of the project, Interplay took it back and shipped it."

The game did okay, and found fans, particularly among helicopter enthusiasts, but it didn't become the huge pick-up-and-play sandbox phenomenon that David and his team felt it potentially could have been. But there was no time for David to stew over the changes as he and his team began work on *Enter The Matrix*.



"The Wachowski Brothers really liked the *Messiah* technology – I think they were fans of *MDK*, too," admits David. "I was asked to come to Joel Silver's offices and meet the directors. So I did and they pitched me the first *Matrix* movie. They had a lot of storyboards and a video of a barrel of fire burning in slow motion. I didn't realise it at the time but what they were demonstrating to me was bullet-time. Because we were deep into *Sacrifice* at the time I actually passed on it (laughs). And then I went to the first *Matrix* movie and just wanted to smash my head into the wall. They then called me up after the movie and asked if I'd seen the film, and would we like to do *Matrix Reloaded*? And of course the answer was, 'hell, yes'! They really wanted to try to break new ground by making the movies and the games work together. They said we could use all of the actors and all of the music, they would write a brand new story and shoot the actors acting it out. It was pretty exciting, as you can imagine.

"The problem was ultimately we had big grandiose plans for the game but getting it all in was proving to be very difficult," David continues. "There were just so many technical issues and problems along the way. I couldn't feel bad about it but it just made it quite difficult and everyone did their best. And then we had some crazy stuff happen to us, we actually got evicted from our building. Our lease was about to expire and our landlord asked me if we would be extending the lease? Well, by that point we had so many people working for us the place was packed (so we really had to plan to leave), so I asked if we could go month to month and pay until the project was completed. He said he knew I'd say that, and that he had already signed a deal with someone else. We had to be out in three months. We had about five to six months left to go on the *Matrix* project, so the timing couldn't have been worse."

In spite of this, *Enter The Matrix* still turned out to be a huge success for Atari, and resulted in the company purchasing Shiny from Interplay for $47 million.

"They ended up making hundreds of millions of dollars, so it was a pretty good deal for them," says David. "It was then we began working on *Path Of Neo*. We also got the best offices that we could imagine, Atari spared no expense. We ended up with custom-built offices right over the water, boats parked against the windows in Newport Beach, Southern California, and it was really great for us. But Atari was starting to run out of money."

Now a tendril of Atari, Shiny began looking for its next project. And David decided to look up some old friends.

"Atari were very interested in doing another *Earthworm Jim* game so I decided to reform the original *Earthworm Jim* team. I called them up and we all met at the Shiny offices and agreed to start the team again.

SHINY TIMELINE 1991-2008

1991 DAVID BEGINS WORKING ON HIS FIRST GAME FOR VIRGIN, THE MCDONALDS 'AD GAME' GLOBAL GLADIATORS.

1992 DAVID IS APPROACHED BY SEGA AND ASKED IF HE COULD DEVELOP THE COMPANY A GAME USING THE 7 UP LICENCE AND ITS COOL SPOT CHARACTER.

1993 FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF COOL SPOT, SEGA ASKS DAVID TO WORK ON THE VIDEOGAME TIE-IN FOR ALADDIN ON THE MEGA DRIVE. IT'S A HUGE SUCCESS.

1993 DAVID IS OFFERED A JOB TO BECOME THE CTO OF THE SEGA TECHNICAL INSTITUTE. HE INTERVIEWS FOR THE JOB BUT TURNS IT DOWN.

1993 PLAYMATES TOYS ASKS DAVID TO HELP IT BREAK INTO THE VIDEOGAME MARKET, HE DECLINES THE JOB BUT INSTEAD ASKS PLAYMATES TO HELP HIM FUND SHINY ENTERTAINMENT, AND IT AGREES.

1993 DAVID HIRES DOUG TENNAPEL, AND SHINY BEGINS TRANSFORMING EARTHWORM JIM INTO A VIDEOGAME.

1994 SHINY BEGINS WORK ON EARTHWORM JIM 2. JIM'S SEQUEL WOULD BE THE LAST GAME THAT DAVID WOULD PROGRAMME FOR SHINY AS HE DECIDES TO FOCUS HIS ATTENTIONS MORE TOWARDS THE RUNNING OF THE COMPANY.



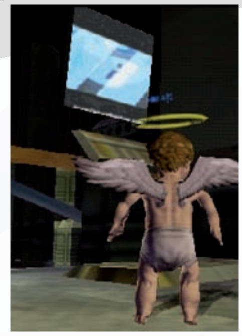


THE DAVE-O-GRAPHY CONT...



MDK

Murder Death Kill? Max, Dr Fluke, Kurt? Mrs Donkey Kong? Regardless of what you may have interpreted those three letters to stand for, for those gamers who were lucky enough to experience Shiny's first foray into three-dimensional gaming one thing was universal – *MDK* was a staggering game. Every element seemed to be meticulously crafted. *MDK*'s alluring Gothic imagery, great humour and brilliant story were based entirely around artist Nick Bruty's idea of being able to shoot someone in a videogame with a sniper rifle, and the industry was never quite the same again.



Messiah

Messiah proved to be yet another dark, melancholic hit for Shiny and David Perry that was built around the notion of possession inside a videogame. Built using a dazzling new third-person three-dimensional engine, *Messiah* saw the player taking on the role of a cute cherub called Bob who has been asked by God to destroy mankind after we nark him off by dabbling in superhuman genetics (never a good idea). However, Bob goes against his master's wishes when he finds out that Satan is pulling the strings of corruption, and plots to put an end to his nefarious ways.

Sacrifice

Built using a refined *Messiah* engine, *Sacrifice* is often heralded as one of the finest PC real-time strategy games ever created. It's a real shame that so few people have been fortunate enough to venture into the enticing world of *Sacrifice* as it's a truly sublime game. *Sacrifice*'s genre-busting freeform approach to its gameplay, resource gathering, whimsical spells and trademark Shiny sense of humour really struck a chord with PC gamers the world over. If we were ever to run a top-25 misplayed videogame gems, it's highly probable that *Sacrifice* would sit at the top.



The Matrix

The Matrix Revolutions and *Path Of Neo* were both heavily criticised for failing to live up to expectations. However, you do get a sense that there was a great deal of bandwagon-jumping going on by the press upon the games' releases, and the vitriol they received was a tad unjust. They're only bad games by comparison to the brilliance of *MDK*, or *Sacrifice*. As far as movie tie-ins go, they were both innovative, captured the spirit of the films brilliantly and offered a silly amount of fan service – including an alternative ending to the film introduced by the Wachowski brothers themselves (sort of).



Our plan was to do a new *Earthworm Jim* from scratch, re-imagine the character and give it a real fresh new look, similar to how DC reboot *Batman*. So we started on that and then Atari told us they couldn't afford to make the game, and that was a problem because we had already started on the *Earthworm Jim* engine, we actually had developers sitting there laying out *Earthworm Jim* levels trying to get the technology up and running. I was also working on another game at the time, which I had really big hopes for. The game was called *Plague* and it had amazing new hooks never seen before. The problem was that we were really struggling to get budget down to 10-12 million, I really needed about 17-20 million to make it because I wanted it to be epic."

Haemorrhaging money, Atari asked Shiny to create a simple *Matrix*-style fighting game for the PSP. But then disaster struck.

"The money got worse and worse and then Atari announced that they were going to sell off all their development studios," says David. "They gave me a deadline (March 2007) to find a buyer for Shiny or they would close the doors. I resigned and promised my team that I would try to find a buyer for Shiny. I had a bigger idea, I got together with two different groups of investors and we tried to buy the entire Atari Corporation and brand out of Infogrames. We offered them hundreds of millions of dollars but they wouldn't take the meeting. I then found a buyer just for Shiny. Surprisingly, the CFO forcing the sale, who set the March deadline, then resigned from Atari. So the panic to sell Shiny vaporised, now I can't have Shiny and I can't buy Atari, so that's when I started consulting for the business. About ten months later, Shiny was bought by Foundation 9, the company I had contacted when I left. So at the end of the day, the staff were safe, that's all that mattered."

David now heads up his own consultancy firm GameConsultants.com, where he lends his business acumen and experience to others. David has also been instrumental in helping people to get a leg up in the industry. His website Game Industry Map provides an online information hub showing the locations and whereabouts of developers on a global map, and his Project Top Secret, in partnership with Acclaim, gave 60,000-plus bedroom programmers and new talent the chance to get involved in the creation of a forthcoming MMO game.

In 2007 Foundation 9 announced it was merging their California-based studios, The Collective and Shiny, and renaming them Double Helix Games. The announcement added flames to an industry rumour that Atari didn't offer up the Shiny name as part of the acquisition package to Foundation 9, and still owned the Shiny name. If true, then with ownership of many of Shiny's past licences still with Interplay, the ashes of this talented studio would be scattered across three different organisations, each part unlikely to ever glisten quite as brightly again.

1995 SOME KEY MEMBERS OF THE TEAM DECIDE TO LEAVE THE COMPANY AFTER DAVID MAKES THE PONDEROUS DECISION TO STEP INTO 3D GAME DEVELOPMENT.

2002 INTERPLAY APPROACHES DAVID AND OFFERS TO BUY SHINY. DAVID AGREES.

2003 ATARI PURCHASES SHINY FROM INTERPLAY FOR $47 MILLION.

2007 SHINY MOVES OFFICES TO NEWPORT BEACH.

2007 ATARI BEGINS SELLING OFF ITS DEVELOPMENT STUDIOS, AND SELLS SHINY TO FOUNDATION 9.

2008 FOUNDATION 9 ANNOUNCES THAT IT IS MERGING SHINY WITH ANOTHER CALIFORNIA-BASED STUDIO, THEY RENAME THEM DOUBLE HELIX GAMES.



The Shiny team working on a *Cauldron* reboot? Possibly.

SKYBLAZER

STRIDER, BUT BETTER*



- **PUBLISHER:** SONY IMAGESOFT
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **GENRE:** ACTION PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

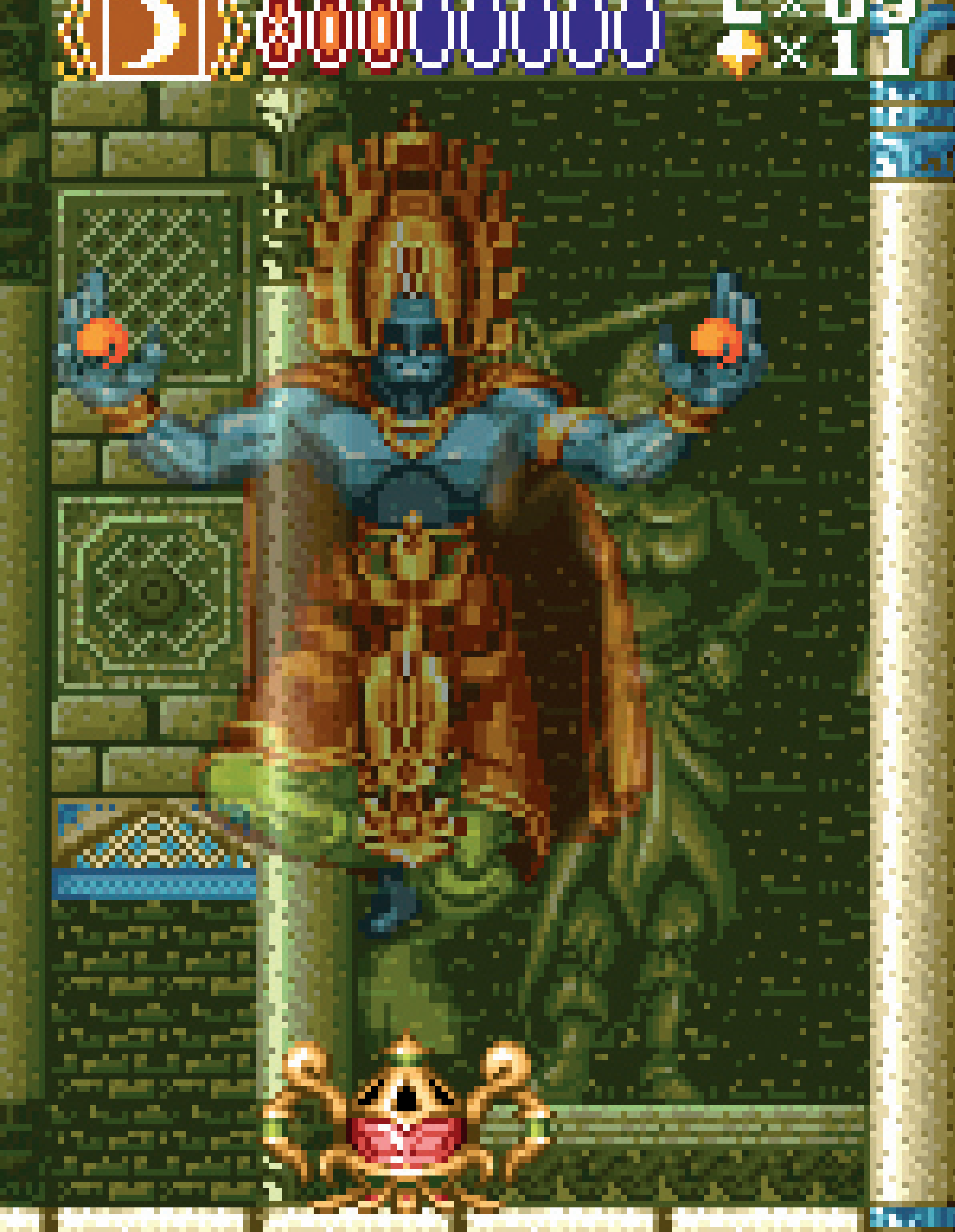
If we had to come up with a list of under-appreciated videogame gems, then soaring near the top of said list would be *Skyblazer*, which is basically '*Strider* meets SNES'. And if that explanation means nothing to you, then know this: you play a guy who can affix himself to walls, in a game with graphics that share the same level of dazzling chirpiness as a *Blue Peter* presenter. Heck, even the bosses seem annoyingly chuffed with themselves. And without spoiling too much of the game for you… they all get killed.

You take on the role of the curtain-haired Sky – who oddly resembles a human version of Konami's Sparkster – in a game that takes you to a mysterious Arabia-themed land to rescue a kidnapped sorceress called Arianna. After a brief prologue level, to get you adjusted to the controls, Sky is beaten to an embarrassing pulp by a winged demon at the behest of an evil god called Raglan – which we're sure is a type of sweatshirt. Anyway, after the *Super Metroid*-style intro, in typical martial arts fashion, you're awoken by an old bald fellow who continually calls you a cur and bemoans that you're far too weak to defeat Raglan. At this point Sky stops the man's unconstructive banter by revealing himself to be the young descendent of a powerful Skylord. He then traverses a bevy of gorgeous side-scrolling levels shuffled with flying sections and odd Nebulous-style tower scaling.

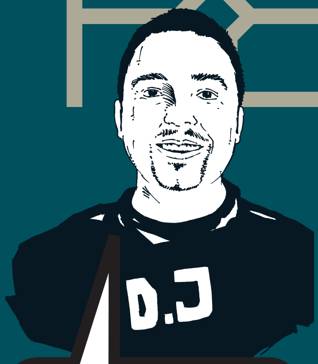
Skyblazer does boast some truly jaw-dropping visuals and its colourful and detailed vistas are coupled with some dazzling effects and clever Mode 7 trickery. If we had to direct one criticism at *Skyblazer*, it's that the game's difficulty spikes are a little erratic – the boss fights in particular seem to vary from stupidly easy to just plain stupid.

While *Skyblazer* doesn't bring anything particularly unique to the run-and-jump genre, what it can boast is glorious Technicolor appeal. And the fact that it has been shamefully overlooked by many SNES owners means you can usually find a copy kicking around for a few quid on eBay. *Only joking Darran.

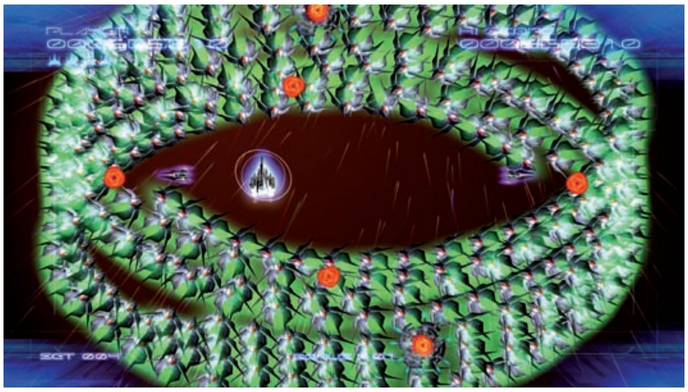


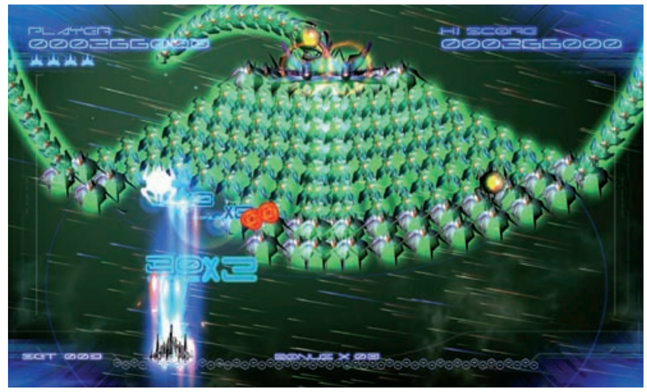


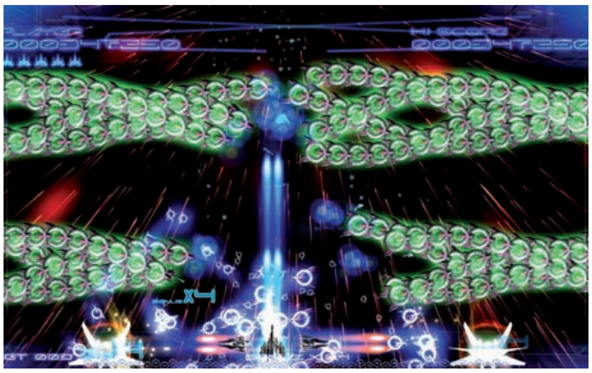
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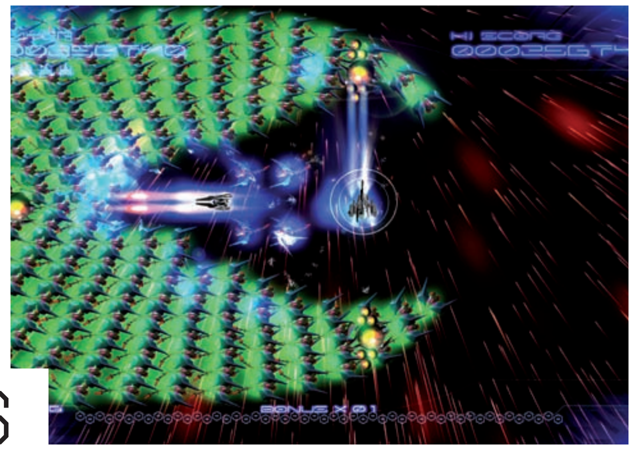


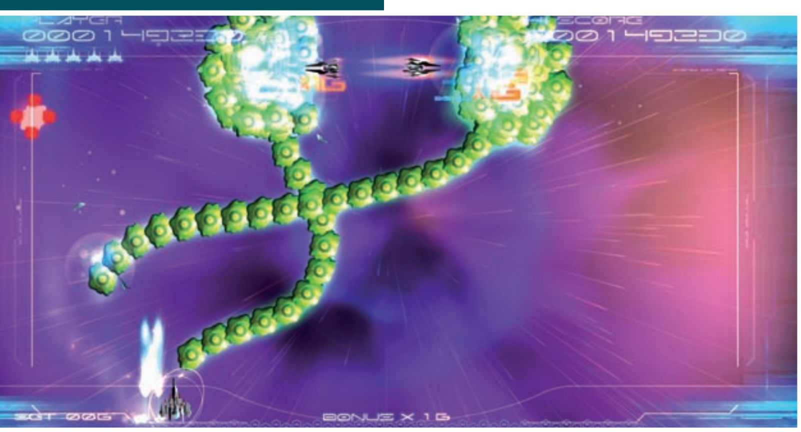
Another month and yet another deluge of excellent downloadable games to wade through. *Galaga Legions* has been getting a lot of play recently, but we've also rediscovered the joys of *Samurai Shodown II* and the excellent *California Games*. Oh and we've even managed to get the exclusive on *Gauntlet*!











GALAGA LEGIONS

INFORMATION

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **COST:** 800 POINTS

Warm on *Pac-Man Championship Edition*'s heels (it's been out for over a year now), *Galaga* is the latest game in the Namco canon to receive a fresh new update.

Utilising the now done to death 'one stick to move, one stick to fire' approach of so many Live Arcade shooters, the difference here is that the second stick is now used to place small satellites that will fire in one of the four placed directions once the right trigger is pressed. While this is massively detached from the original *Galaxian/Galaga* gameplay, it does add a much-welcomed layer of strategy to the mix as you work out where best to place your lone drones – on-screen lines give you a brief indication of what direction each attacking enemy wave will take. The waves are often vast in number, but some can be dispatched by shooting the bigger Galaxian that accompanies it.

Galaga Legions therefore becomes a race against time, with you quickly dropping your satellites in the most strategic places possible and shooting down those key enemies. Take too long to contain the ever-increasing waves and the screen will rapidly fill up with aliens, which wouldn't be too much of an issue if they weren't the most-gaudy creations to ever appear in a videogame.

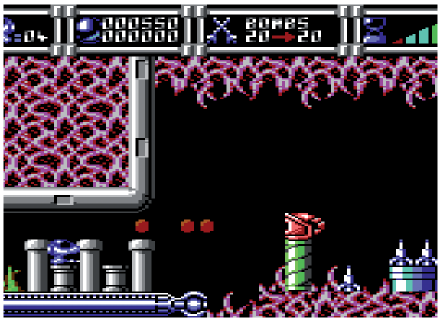
As great as *Legions* is, it's a very hard game to concentrate on, simply because your brain is likely to implode due to the sheer amount of colours. Coming across like the bastard child of *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2*, *Space Giraffe* and *Rez*, *Legions* constantly assaults you with wave upon wave of kaleidoscopic enemies and it takes amazing concentration to separate everything that's happening on screen, especially if you use the excellent retro skins that give you more traditional Galaxians to battle.

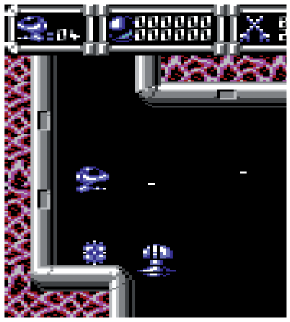
All is not lost, however, as a powerful new weapon exists that makes it far easier to deal with the continually assaulting enemies. Taking down the plasma balls that appear on certain stages will create a vortex that will suck up a maximum of 16 Galaxians and cause them to fight on your behalf until they're destroyed by their former comrades.

To further increase *Legions*' longevity, Namco has included two distinct modes that enable you to play through several distinct areas or simply concentrate on a single one in order to boost your high score. Indeed, while it's not quite up to the sheer variety of *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2*, this is still a great effort from Namco that's bound to go down well with the shoot-'em-up fraternity.

In fact, our only real issue with *Galaga Legions* is that it shares very little with the original series to be considered as part of the canon. There are lots of nods to the classic franchise, but the core gameplay is a world away from what fans are used to. Get past this niggle and you'll discover yet another superb shooter to add to the 360's library.

83%





CYBERNOID: THE FIGHTING MACHINE

INFORMATION

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 500 POINTS

Despite the hefty cost of its games – paying the same price as NES titles still seems way too high – there's no denying that publisher Commodore Gaming knows what makes a good C64 title. Raffaele Cecco's *Cybernoid* is just one of the latest 8-bit titles to hit the Virtual Console, and while it doesn't look quite as good as we remember, it remains an excellent little blaster.

Cybernoid is actually a bit of an odd beast, for unlike many shooters currently available on the service, it requires a fair amount of precision. Now this isn't because you're required to delicately weave your way through hundreds of bullets, but you are required to squeeze your tiny fighter through some very tight and dangerous spots.

Despite the occasional trickiness of *Cybernoid: The Fighting Machine*, it remains a thoroughly engaging shooter that requires a steady trigger finger and nerves of steel. Oh and the music still sounds stunning.

81%

BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED

INFORMATION

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **COST:** 800 POINTS

Now this is how you do a remake! Apologies for the exclamation mark, but this effort from Swedish-based developer GRIN is quite frankly fantastic. Filled with love, care and attention, it's astonishing to think that this has come from a country more commonly associated with Ulrika Jonsson and Sven-Göran Eriksson and not the Land of the Rising Sun.

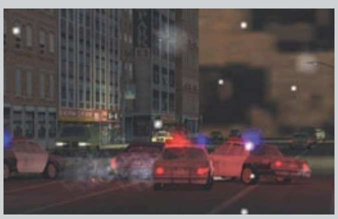
Beautifully paced, stunning to look at, and perhaps, most importantly, based on the excellent NES conversion, *Bionic Commando Rearmed* is a truly superb run-'n'-gunner that will have you desperately praying for the incoming 3D effort (also by GRIN) and thanking whoever it was at Capcom that greenlighted the project in the first place.

Sure it takes a little while to become accustomed to your new arm's abilities – there's no jumping involved here – but the cleverly constructed levels, brilliantly scripted boss encounters and the sly nods to the original NES hit are so well put together that you won't mind the initial hardship. Now Capcom, we urge you to give GRIN *Strider* so we can give it 100% and retire from videogames.

88%







DRIVER

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** PLAYSTATION NETWORK
» **COST:** £3.49

The first thing you'll discover with *Driver* is that its opening car-park level is still a real bitch to complete and that it doesn't look quite as nice as you remember. After that though it's all good, and despite the odd niggle here and there Reflections' game has aged incredibly well. There's some wonderful variety to the available missions, car handling throughout still feels spot-on, while even the plot remains enjoyable. A great little twist on the age-old driving genre.

80%

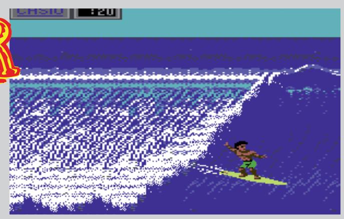


SAMURAI SHODOWN II

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 900 POINTS

Crikey, we've only just got to grips with *Samurai Shodown* again and the sequel's already here. We're almost wishing we hadn't wasted our last 900 points, as this follow-up is a massive improvement over the already fantastic original and boasts four additional characters, greatly improved animation and backdrops, a plethora of new special moves and tightly tuned gameplay. It's easily our favourite game in the series and should be downloaded immediately by anyone who loves a good scrap.

91%



CALIFORNIA GAMES

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 500 POINTS

While we're rather annoyed that the brilliant Sega Master System version still hasn't hit Nintendo's Virtual Console yet, the original Commodore 64 outing is a more than worthy alternative. While the controls remain achingly simplistic, they work extremely well on the Wii's Remote and allow you to enjoy the engrossing gameplay. Graphically it's all looking a little long in the tooth, but the bouncy tunes, enjoyable multiplayer and excellent – if rather limited – choice of events more than makes up for it.

78%



KING OF THE MONSTERS

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 900 POINTS

While there are those who have a special soft spot for the *King Of The Monsters*, the sad truth is that time hasn't been very kind to it. The huge sprites now look extremely basic (especially when put up against the ones in *Rampage*, see our 'Making of' on page 70) and lack the charm and fun factor of the aforementioned Midway effort, while the dull gameplay mechanics are likely to lead to yawns of boredom instead of howls of excitement. Our advice? Save your hard-earned points for something else.

46%

REVIEW

GAUNTLET

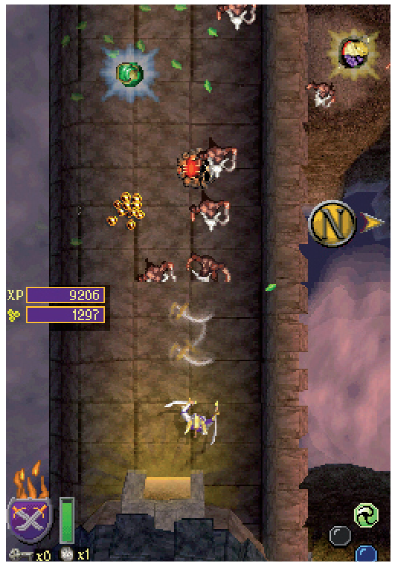
MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

INFORMATION

- **SYSTEM:** DS
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** 31 OCTOBER
- **PUBLISHER:** BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4



» Stay away from these red devils as they can leech your magic and stop you from using it.



» Generators still come in three flavours. Destroy them quickly to avoid getting overrun by enemies.



» Even the environment is dangerous in *Gauntlet*. Get too close to the edge and gusts of wind will send you to your peril.



It has taken 23 years, but Atari's long-running franchise (looked after by Eidos and Backbone Entertainment for this DS outing) finally has a handheld outing that does its name justice. Of course, we'll be quick to point out that this latest version of the multiplayer classic certainly disappoints in places (the original arcade game is nowhere to be seen, and it lacks many of the role-playing-game mechanics of its last-gen peers), but it's still a hell of a lot of fun to play through.

This is mainly down to the multiplayer component, which, for the first time in a handheld *Gauntlet*, allows you to play with anyone, no matter where they are. Forget about the flimsy plot that holds *Gauntlet* DS's many levels together, as all you need to know is that this is just as much fun as the original arcade game from 1985. *Gauntlet* has always been an excellent fusion of teamwork and callous survival and this latest offering is no different. With players no longer confined to the same bit of screen, it's now possible to freely explore the detailed (if very drab looking) worlds that Backbone Entertainment has created, and drink in the many puzzles that now punctuate the constant hacking and slashing.

While the online multiplayer shenanigans are obviously geared towards completing the lengthy story mode, Backbone has also included a number of other modes, including the classic Death Match mode (single and team) to ensure that there's plenty to bring you back once the main challenge has been completed.

RPG elements also rear their head in this new handheld offering, although sadly, they're not quite up to the standard we would have hoped for. New abilities (activated via the touchstone) come along all too rarely, while there are no stats or additional powers for you to play around with. It's a real pity as something in the vein of *Diablo II* could have worked brilliantly on Nintendo's machine. Our only other real misgiving is the way the screen spins around when you hold down on the fire button, while this allows you to strafe (very handy, especially as your direction can be controlled via the shoulder buttons) it's initially very disorientating.

Still, it's the enduring gameplay that makes *Gauntlet* what it is, and Backbone has thankfully left this intact. Some will no doubt find the constant monster battling repetitive, and to a certain extent they'd be right, but that's the very nature of Atari's classic coin-op. Backbone has essentially taken the essence of the original hit and made it accessible to a brand new generation of gamers. For that it should be applauded.









OPINION

For me, *Gauntlet* has always been about the multiplayer experience, and this new Nintendo DS effort certainly doesn't disappoint. Level design is incredibly good in places, the enemies come thick and fast at you, while there are also plenty of nods to some of the earlier games in the *Gauntlet* franchise. Best of all though is the excellent multiplayer mode, that gives *Gauntlet* DS some much-needed legs and ensures that you'll be returning to it long after its been completed. We definitely recommend that you pick this one up.

Stuart Hunt

81%

HOMEBREW RATED

RETRO GAMER LOOKS AT WORMS THAT GLOW IN THE DARK AND WEAPONS THAT BLAST HOLES IN SPACE/TIME

ATOMIC WORM

WIGGLE IT JUST A LITTLE BIT



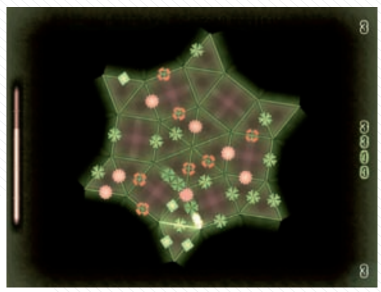
FORMAT: WINDOWS PC
DEVELOPED BY: CHARLIE DOG GAMES
LINK: WWW.CHARLIEDOGGAMES.COM/?PAGE_ID=42
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

The gameplay of *Atomic Worm* is similar to the perennial *Snake* – the screen is littered with items to collect and the player has to guide their worm around in order to build up a train of items behind them. The twist here is that collecting three or more of the same item will, after a short period of time, cause them to combust, a good thing since blowing enough objects up will charge up wormy so that it can destroy the various hazards that begin appearing a few levels into the game and will eventually open the exit to the next level.

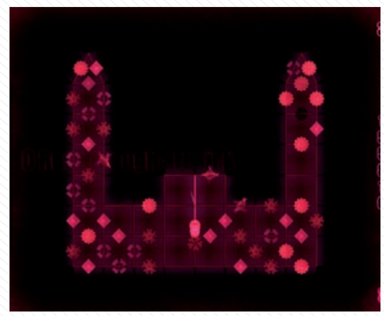
Graphically, *Atomic Worm* has been to the 'glowing abstract graphics' school of design, although it manages to remain uncluttered for the majority of the time and the various shapes are pretty easy to discern. A fairly major issue has to be the controls, the mouse pointer acts as a target and the game works out which route to take, with the next line that the worm will follow highlighted. Unfortunately, this process can be skittish (particularly on the rotating stages where the movement of the arena changes the worm's position relative to the pointer), which means that a player-selected path can unexpectedly be changed just as the worm reaches the junction. Mildly annoying if a well-laid plan to grab a particular object is thwarted, but it can also see the annelid protagonist aimed at something fatal such as its own tail or a hazard.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 62% Sorely lacking a decent continue option.
AESTHETICS: 81% Lots of glowing effects and a reasonable in-game soundtrack.
PLAYABILITY: 83% Easy to get into, but fiddly controls get in the way later.
LONGEVITY: 80% A lot of variety and some challenging stages later on.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 85%



» Is it atomic? Yes sir, it's very atomic!



SHOTGATE

JUST DROPPING IN FOR SOME CAKE



FORMAT: COMMODORE 64
DEVELOPED BY: SIMON QUERNHORST
LINK: WWW.QUERNHORST.DE/ATARI/SK.HTML
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: 45 EUROS (LIMITED EDITION CARTRIDGE) OR 10 EUROS (DISK)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

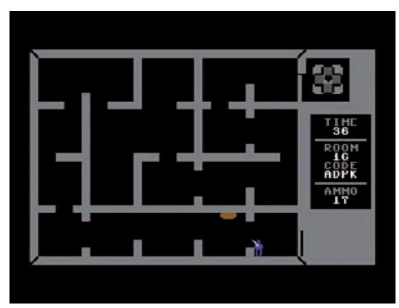
Despite the aggressive name, *Shotgate* is actually a puzzle game based on *Narbacular Drop* (which 'evolved' into *Portal*), where the player is placed into various training environments with a prototype Shotgate generator and given a limited amount of time and ammunition to reach the exit and the proffered reward of cake.

The Shotgate gun works to a simple principle, it 'fires' spatial portals that will stick to the floor, walls and ceiling. Only two portals can exist at any time (firing a third causes one of the existing ones to cancel out) and entering one instantaneously transports the player to the other, so, by positioning portals and traversing them, the player can reach otherwise inaccessible parts of the testing area.

Shotgate is a somewhat mixed bag. Despite some simplistic visuals, the shoehorning of the concept behind *Portal* into two dimensions and 8-bits has been well thought out and the puzzles start off simple, but soon offer a challenge, with the level-code system there to prevent the early training levels from becoming a chore. We do feel that the aiming mechanism is a weak point in the design, while left and right on the joystick perform the obvious actions, rotating the gun is far less intuitive with the vertical controls rotating it through the eight possible firing angles. While not the most annoying control system ever, this does take a little while to get used to and detracts from what is otherwise an enjoyable and unusual game.



» *Shotgate* builds up the difficulty nicely, making it a game for all.



» Excellent, if slightly expensive, with only a few minor niggles.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 68% Simple but with a useful level select system.
AESTHETICS: 63% Weak but functional graphics and sound effects.
PLAYABILITY: 84% Starts off simple but builds up the difficulty nicely.
LONGEVITY: 81% Repeats level designs.
VALUE FOR MONEY: 69% A bit expensive on cartridge, but the disk is very reasonable.
OVERALL: 85%

RETRO GAMER – WE'RE HELPING YOU SEE THE BIGGER (OR SMALLER) PICTURE!

PICROSS ST

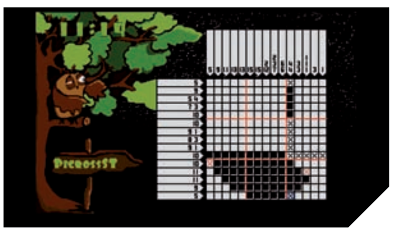
HOW DO PICTURES GET CROSS...?

FORMAT: ATARI ST
DEVELOPED BY: THE PICROSS TEAM
LINK: PICROSSST.FREE.FR
RELEASE DATE: JULY 2008
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

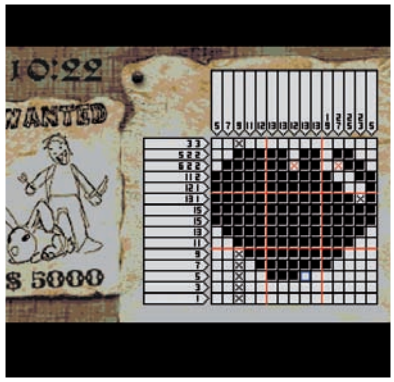


The objective of *PicrossST* sounds simple initially – the player is presented with a 15x15 cell grid and must re-create a picture by clicking on squares in that grid to make them darken. It's a bit like playing with a graphics editor, but one where someone else has decided on what you're going to be drawing, hasn't mentioned what they've thought of and will penalise you for mistakes!

They've at least placed numeric clues next to every row and column and these hints represent unbroken runs of cells. For example, if a row has '182' to the side of it there will be a lone cell, eight in a row and then a further two, each of which will be separated from their neighbours by at least one unlit cell. And just to get things moving, when each round starts a random row and column will be selected and unveiled.



» The ability to save your progress is a very welcome feature.



» Seemingly impossible to start with, you'll soon get the hang of it.

Everything is mouse controlled and the design has been given consideration right down to saving current progress, allowing players to complete a couple of puzzles when they've a spare 20 minutes. For novices, a few initial goes and referring to the instructions means that *PicrossST* goes from being seemingly impossible to an entertaining logic puzzle. And, with all the pre-built levels, a level designer and even randomly constructed grids made available to exceptional players, there's a lot of playing time to be had from *PicrossST*.



» How SATS results will be delivered in 2009.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 91% Lots of options and a useful level selection system.
AESTHETICS: 84% Good music and a great collection of background images.
PLAYABILITY: 89% Equally easy to pick up for long plays or short bursts.
LONGEVITY: 87% Loads of levels, an editor and random puzzles for experts.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 88%

FUSION

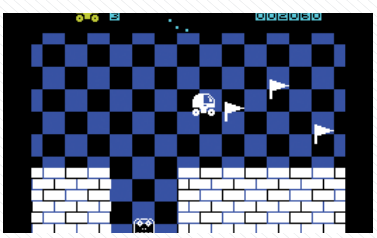
DRIVING YOU UP THE WALL... THEN ALONG IT!



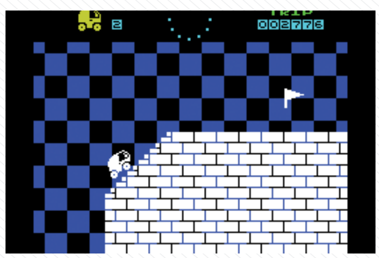
FORMAT: SPECTRUM
DEVELOPED BY: JONATHAN CAULDWELL
LINK: MEMBERS.FORTUNECITY.COM/JONATHAN6/EGGHEAD
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

Here's another new Speccy game from Jonathan Cauldwell. *Fusion* was, along with my own *Co-Axis 2189* for the C64, developed for use in the high-score competition at Retro Fusion a couple of months ago and released at large on Jonathan's website shortly afterwards.

It plays like a cross between a push-scrolling platform game and *Moon Patrol*, with the action revolving around a little vehicle that must be navigated across perilous landscapes using its manoeuvrability and an unusual ability to jump in order to clear chasms and avoid the evil-looking denizens. Each level must be completed within a fairly strict time limit but as players become more seasoned they can deviate from taking the fastest (or when it becomes more necessary during later levels, safest) route to collect the bonus flags that are littered about the place.



» Your buggy's bounce after a jump is a nice little addition.



» Four-wheel drive comes in rather handy at times.

There are some nice little touches throughout as well, such as the horizontally moving aliens that appear a few levels in, materialising as though being transported in, or the cute way that the player's buggy bounces after a jump or tilts as it trundles up and down slopes. And, as with just about all of Jonathan's games, *Fusion* is a very enjoyable game to play. The controls are responsive and although the variable speed of the push scrolling will require getting used to when lining up jumps, the earlier stages give time to acclimatise to it before things get really busy.



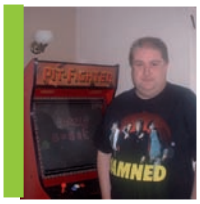
» The aliens will waste no time in writing off your buggy.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 84% Good control options and a high-score table.
AESTHETICS: 78% Simple backgrounds and effects with some nice sprites.
PLAYABILITY: 86% Pick-up-and-play action gaming fun.
LONGEVITY: 80% Good starting levels and some tricky later ones.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 86%

HOMEBREW HEROES

Cronosoft



RETRO GAMER CONTINUES TO TRACK DOWN THE INDIVIDUALS AND COMPANIES BEHIND OUR THRIVING HOMEBREW COMMUNITY. THIS MONTH WE SHOOT THE BREEZE WITH CRONOSOFT'S **SIMON ULLYATT**

Retro Gamer: Why did you set Cronosoft up?
Simon Ullyatt: Going back a few years, I edited, along with some others, a fanzine for the Oric computer called *Rhetoric*. However, all things come to an end eventually, and after a couple of dozen issues, it fizzled out, and I found myself at a loose end. I've always liked obsolete or retro stuff, and made a post on the World of Spectrum website, enquiring if there was any interest in building up a software label, in a kind of DIY way, but looking as professional as possible.

RG: Why choose the Spectrum as the first system that you covered?
SU: It just kind of happened that way. The Spectrum was always the format I've been most 'at home with', having owned one since 1984, and while I love and own other systems too, the Speccy is what I'm most familiar with.

RG: Was it easy finding coders initially who were willing to contribute?
SU: Well after Jonathan Cauldwell and the Shaw Brothers contributed the initial games, word soon got around and more and more games started to be sent in, which was very encouraging to see.

RG: How many games does Cronosoft publish each year?
SU: It does tend to vary, but I would say that it's around eight to ten titles a year, which I feel is pretty good going. Sometimes, there are delays though in getting games out (as people will know), as we sometimes hit upon difficulties with transferring and duplicating games on some formats, due to many of the new games being written on emulators rather than the actual 'real' systems.

RG: So what do you look for when you're publishing games?
SU: The main thing for me is depth of gameplay. Graphics and sound are maybe secondary – though that's not to say they're bad of course – but it's very important that a game has a lot of gameplay in there and that it offers more than just eye candy. I think that's what maybe killed off the 8-bit micros early in the Nineties. Software companies were too concerned with performing the impossible, and taking the latest arcade conversion and trying to re-create them in 8-bit form, leading to some dreadful atrocities that just ended up disappointing those that bought them.

The downside, however, is when you occasionally get sent a game that just isn't up to our required standards. The hardest thing to do is when you have to reject a game, as it can sometimes upset the authors. That's the bit I find most difficult, but if we published anything and everything we received, then I think we'd lose all of our customers overnight!

RG: Which title would you say has been the most popular?
SU: It's hard to really say, as most games don't seem to have a shelf life as such any more. Possibly the first *Egghead*, as it's been around the longest, and is still selling well. The various VIC-20 games that we have are very popular as well.

RG: You've published many of Jonathan Cauldwell's games, how did your collaboration with him come about?
SU: It was immediately after posting on the World of Spectrum forum for the first time where I said I was looking for games. Jonathan got in contact with me, and initially offered his game *Egghead In Space*, followed by two unreleased games he'd written in the mid-Nineties, entitled *Dead Or Alive* and *Gloop*. Jonathan has been absolutely fantastic, and comes up with a steady stream of games of pure quality and originality. It's safe to say that without him, there wouldn't have been a Cronosoft. He's a very friendly bloke, too, and we often meet up at the retro gaming shows for a beer and chat.

RG: Why do you think it is that his titles have such a huge following?
SU: I think it's because he comes up with some of the most original ideas. For example, *Loco Bingo* combines trains, bingo, and futuristic TV into a platform game. Sometimes I think he may have put too much LSD into his cocoa, but he comes through with a quality game every time, and always with superb playability.

He's also a master of programming – cramming 16 sub-games into a 48K Spectrum for the game *GAMEX* proves that. I really think that if he'd been programming back in the early-Eighties, Ultimate would have been definitely knocking on his door!

RG: So what titles can we look forward to in the near future?
SU: We've got the third part in the *Farmer Jack* trilogy, *Farmer Jack – Treasure Trove* from Bob Smith on the Speccy, plus *Sudoku*, which is a joint Speccy and Amstrad CPC release. You'll have to visit our main page for news on further upcoming releases.

RG: Why do you think Cronosoft has been able to survive in such a small market?
SU: Well we're non-profit making, but then it costs me virtually nothing either. Cronosoft makes a small profit on each tape sold, but whatever is in the kitty goes on a bit of promotion here and there. I try to keep it small scale, and do as much as I can myself to keep the actual costs down. Duplication and printing is all done in-house manually, which although laborious, really saves on the cash.

RG: Why do you think the homebrew scene remains so popular?
SU: Just as retro gaming is popular, so is retro programming. People love to create games of their own, which they can then show off to others. For non-programmers, getting new games in the style and spirit of the old days brings back a little bit of the excitement of youth.

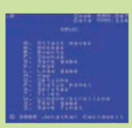
FIVE NEWEST TITLES



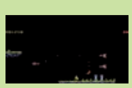
Blue Star (VIC-20)
A new game from Steve McCrea for the unexpanded VIC. Infiltrate the alien base and take out the CPU! Find equipment to help you in your quest. See if you can succeed in less than 50 space-jiffies.



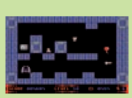
SplATTR (Spectrum 128K)
Bob Smith has taken shoot-'em-ups to a new dimension with this immensely colourful blaster. Huge graphics and fiendish gameplay. **Retro Gamer** rated it at 91%.



Shoot 'Em Up Designer (Spectrum 48K)
A supremely powerful piece of software. Make your own standalone machine code shoot-'em-up games that run independently of the creator software. Choose vertical or horizontal shooters, design backgrounds, sprites, attack waves, and more.



Star Sabre (Amstrad CPC)
A superb shooter from Down Under, in the vein of *R-Type/Nemesis* – Paul Kooistra's *Star Sabre* is slick and smooth, and very colourful.



Balloonacy! (Amstrad CPC)
A conversion of an original C64 game – originally by Richard Bayliss – Kev Thacker has brought this superb gem to the CPC.

retro GAMER

LOAD 57 NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 06 NOVEMBER 2008

Thar be Dragons!

In another gargantuan exclusive, **Retro Gamer** speaks to the creators of *Panzer Dragoon* and discovers how they created one of Sega's most popular and breathtakingly beautiful series.



More Exciting Features

» Commodore 64 legend, Andrew Spencer breaks years of silence and looks back with us at his acclaimed *International Soccer* and *Basketball* games.

» We speak to the creators of *Alien Vs Predator* and discover how they turned it into one of the Atari Jaguar's most essential games.

» Formed by Sid Meier and Bill Stealey in 1982, MicroProse enjoyed nearly two decades in the sun before finally closing in 2001. Find out how it all started next issue.

RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO GORDON SINCLAIR, ONE QUARTER OF THE EXCELLENT WEEKEND GAMER WEBSITE…

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent resource site dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another superb Atari site with every machine from the 2600 to arcade classics.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum catering for an Aussie audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Excellent site for the Amstrad range of computers with all the latest news and reviews.

C64 GAME ENDINGS
www.c64endings.co.uk/
Over 260 endings for classic and not so classic C64 games.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
This great Amiga site is run by Kim Lemon, owner of Lemon 64.

MAC RETRO
www.macretro.tk
Getting emulators up and running on the Mac, this is a brilliant site.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's systems, but with lots of other stuff to enjoy.

WEEKEND GAMER
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk
Great site that covers a range of topics, from TV to gaming.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Sega focused, but also dedicated to covering as many arcade games as possible.

NTSC-UK
http://ntsc-uk.domino.org/
This site is devoted to imports, but there's a retro section with useful advice on rare imports.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
http://old-computers.com
If you think the 2600 is ancient, visit this fascinating site.



When did you set up Weekend Gamer?

Gordon Sinclair: Ian (**RG**'s Opa-Opa) made the first Weekend Gamer TV show in May 2006. It was a few months after that when we launched the website that it really took flight though, as this allowed a wider audience access to our work. Since then we have added an audio offshoot called 'WGAX – Weekend Gamer Audio eXtra'. This is a traditional-style radio show, with songs to separate the chat, the only difference being that all of the music and all of the discussion is based on gaming. We also now have an active forum as well as an online theatre for the people who are limited in what they can download.

Why base it around everything instead of a specific machine?

GS: Because we're gamers, not Spectrum gamers or PlayStation gamers, just gamers. If a game is good on any machine we will play it (though Opa does have an aversion to Amstrad games). We have a soft spot for the underappreciated VIC-20 and have attempted to start an archive of VIC games, but the TV and audio shows take up so much time that we haven't been able to put enough energy into it.

What gives it the edge over similar sites?

GS: Weekend Gamer is made for the people who have a life outside of gaming. We don't make the shows for the teenagers that spend ten hours every day playing *Call Of Duty 4*, or for the people with huge disposable incomes that buy every new game on the day of release. We have a job to do and bills to pay so we focus more on the slightly older games to the downright retro. If it is a choice of pay the mortgage or buy *Metal Gear Solid 4*, then the bills get paid and we pick up some classic pre-owned games in a 'two for a tenner' deal instead. I think it is this ethos that helps us stand out.

What's the most popular part of the site?

GS: I would definitely say our 'King of the Quid's' competition. To enter you just buy a game on any system for a pound or less. We have run the competition for the last two years now and had a massive response. We have had well over 100 entries covering more than 20 different systems. The **Retro Gamer** forum voted me as the winner in 2007 and we are very shortly going to be starting the voting for the 2008 entries.

How can our readers contribute?

GS: The easiest way to join in is to leave us feedback on either the **Retro Gamer** or Weekend Gamer forums letting us know what games or themes you would like us to cover. Our shows would not be as good as they are without the help of viewers/listeners like Andy Jenkins (Uglifruit on the **RG** forum) who supplies us with the most amazing jingles and musical ditties and Stephen Bruce (Antiriad2097) who has sent us games and other gaming goodies that he thinks would be good on the show.

For those who like the sound of their own voice, we also have two features on the audio show they can help with. 'Guest Reviewer' does what it says on the tin and on the 'Round Table' we have a four-way discussion on a specific gaming subject.

What's your favourite game and why?

GS: Mine would have to be *3D Deathchase* on the Spectrum. Such a simple game, but what a game! Once you get the hang of it you can 'clock' it and the difficulty resets. This means you could actually play indefinitely, so it becomes a stamina test as much as a skill test. And to think it was written in less than 16K.

RETRO MUSEUM
www.retrocomputermuseum.co.uk
What's interesting about this is that very soon it will be a physical place you can visit.

RACKET BOY
http://racketboy.com/
There's a definite Sega slant to Racket Boy, but it's a lot of fun.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega.

SEGA-16.COM
www.sega-16.com
Mega Drive site with some incredibly in-depth interviews.

RETRO101
www.retro101.co.uk
It's fairly new, but Retro101 has some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game market.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com/index.php
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/themanor33/TRBv2/
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SHOOT THE CORE
www.shootthecore.moonpod.com
This excellent site loves shmups of all descriptions.

SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Absolutely amazing website dedicated to the best gaming genre of all time.

VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans, and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Your one-stop shop for everything VC-related.

WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

If you want to add your website to our expanding directory, please contact Darran at darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk.

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Weekend Gamer
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk

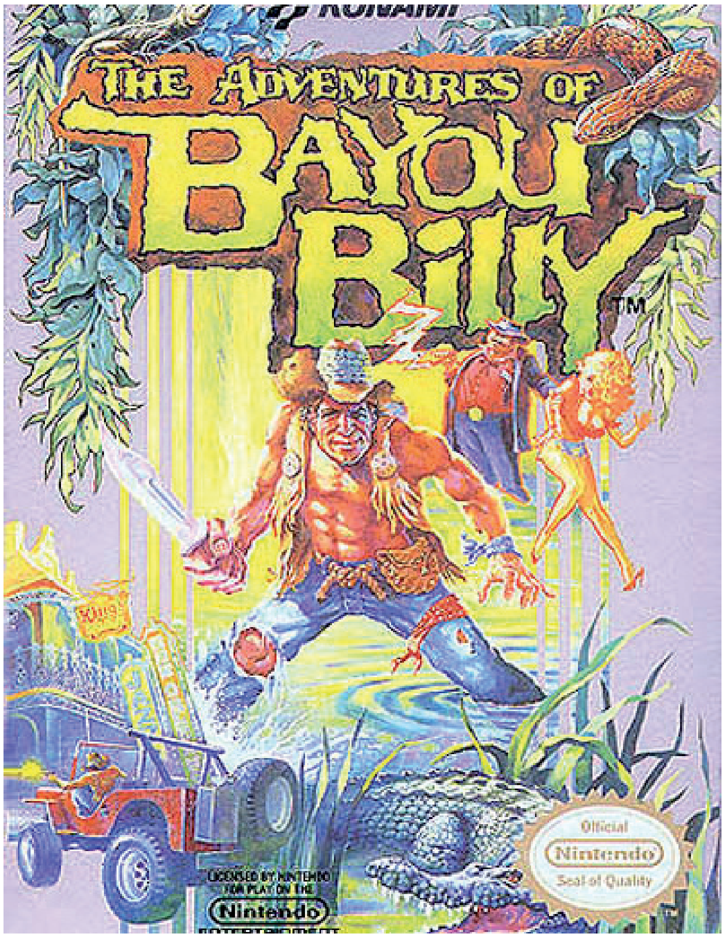


Our very own moderator Sir Clive (or Gordon Sinclair as he's normally known) helps run the excellent Weekend Gamer, so it seems only fair that we reward all his hard work with a plug. For those unaware, Weekend Gamer consists of four gamers whose love for gaming has created a truly enjoyable site that prides itself on its reader interaction.

The highlights of the site are the excellent video and radio shows, with the latter featuring some great retro music and some genuinely amusing banter between Gordon and Ian.

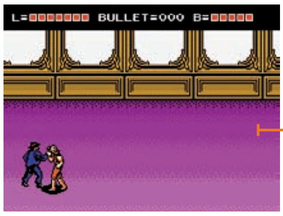
You'll also find a surprising amount of facts and figures packed into each show. A great little site that should be visited by anyone with a passion for gaming.

END/GAME

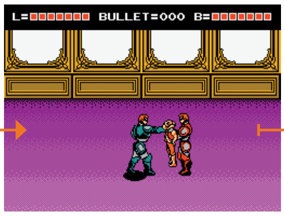


BAYOU BILLY

Crocodile Dundee never made it into a videogame – which is probably quite a good thing – but that didn't stop Konami from trying to cash in on the popularity of the films. Meet Bayou Billy, dweller of the Louisiana Swamps and a rock-hard NES game



SCREEN 1
After fighting mobsters in swamps and travelling to the Big Apple to fight mobsters on the streets, Bayou Billy ends up inside a pink-carpetted skyscraper to fight… you guessed it, a mobster… but in a blue suit.



SCREEN 2
In typical side-scrolling fighter fashion, after killing this mobster, Billy must take on two superhuman RoboCop rip-offs. These guys are annoying, powerful, and, as this picture proves, can punch right through Billy's ugly face.



SCREEN 3
With the legions of mobsters and two RoboCops defeated, Billy is left to liberate his hot-panted woman, Annabelle, the only way he knows how: by indulging in some fully clothed sexy time, aka a dry session.



SCREEN 4
Them's wise words, Billy, and to be fair you did keep your word – although there was that peculiar LCD game you put your name to, but what's a portable, plastic, throwaway spin-off between friends, eh?



SCREEN 5
Ahhh. A touching embrace delicately lit by moonlight and spoiled somewhat by Billy's clear lack of trousers. Geez, this guy might have the strength and looks of a steroid-pumped swamp rat, but subtlety is most certainly not his forte.